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# **Evans-Pritchard's humanism and the development of anthropology**

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**A thesis submitted for the  
degree of Master of Arts**

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February 1999

Thesis submitted for the  
degree of Master of Arts

## **Evans-Pritchard's humanism and the development of anthropology**

### **Abstract**

This thesis discusses E. E. Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works, especially his humanistic orientation in social anthropology. The work has been of fundamental importance in the development of modern anthropology in Britain.

Mary Douglas, one of Evans-Pritchard's pupils has already attempted a study of this kind (Douglas, M. 1980). She approached his works and life thematically, focusing particularly on his theoretical interest in "primitive mentality". Guided by Douglas's study, this thesis traces his intellectual development chronologically from his early scientific orientation to the later humanistic program.

This thesis is also a biographical study of Evans-Pritchard's anthropological work as discussed in the context of the works of his precursors and colleagues. It starts with his early anthropological period, when he was under the influence of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, then discusses how Evans-Pritchard developed his own unique perspective and methods of analysis, the humanistic program, which distinguished his later work, and finally tries to make an overall evaluation of his anthropological humanism.

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## ***Introduction***

This thesis discusses E. E. Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works, especially his humanistic orientation in social anthropology. The work has been of fundamental importance in the development of modern anthropology in Britain. Beidelman (1991) defines Evans-Pritchard's profile as '... the most important social anthropologist of post-World War-II Britain on account both of his numerous influential writings and the many students he produced ...' (Beidelman 1991:185).

It is easy to make a short bibliography of this prominent anthropologist based on his academic and personal record as given in Appendix 1 (A Short Biographical Note of E.E. Evans-Pritchard). This would not be comprehensive enough to grasp his works and life, nor to do justice to his ideas, which are often implicitly underlying in his writings. The same thing is true of his general image which we come across in some introductory books of anthropology. This thesis, in this sense, challenges such stereotyped portraits of Evans-Pritchard.

Mary Douglas, one of Evans-Pritchard's pupils has already attempted a study of this kind (Douglas 1980). She approaches his works and life, focusing primarily on his theoretical interest in "primitive mentality". Guided by Douglas's study, this thesis traces Evans-Pritchard's intellectual development from his early scientific orientation to the later humanistic program.

This thesis is a biographical study of Evans-Pritchard's anthropological works as discussed in the context of the works of his precursors. It starts with Evans-Pritchard's early anthropological period, when he was under the influence of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, then discusses how he developed his own unique perspective, methods of analysis, and the humanistic program, which distinguishes his later work, and finally tries to make an overall evaluation of his anthropological philosophy. This thesis is based on library research on Evans-Pritchard's writings, especially after the



Marett Lecture of 1950, and on the relevant arguments. The research included a series of interviews with contemporary scholars, mainly in anthropology<sup>1</sup>.

Chapter 1 focuses on Evans-Pritchard's early anthropological period when he started reading anthropology, which was then dominated by Malinowski. Here I discuss primarily Evans-Pritchard's immediate rebellion against this teacher and his less holistic analysis. Chapter 2 deals with his repudiation of another predecessor, or Radcliffe-Brown. The Marett Lecture explicitly presents his criticism of the natural-scientific program in social anthropology, and also his announcement of this subject as one of the humanities. The next two chapters attempt to pin down his humanistic orientation at the deeper level. Chapter 4 discusses his idea of incorporating a historical approach in social anthropology. Chapter 5 concentrates on one of the main tasks of the anthropologist as a cultural translator. Chapter 6 makes an overall evaluation of his anthropological humanism based on the last four chapters.

Each chapter title was named after Evans-Pritchard's own essays and a collection of essays which was dedicated to him, namely Chapter 2: Anthropology and the Social Sciences (Evans-Pritchard 1937a), Chapter 3: The Marett Lecture (Evans-Pritchard 1950), Chapter 4: Anthropology and History (Evans-Pritchard 1961), Chapter 5: The Translation of Culture (Beidelman [ed.] 1971) and Chapter 6: Social Anthropology (Evans-Pritchard 1951)

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<sup>1</sup> This interview scheme was carried out in December, 1998 and January, 1999. The interviewees were selected among contemporary scholars of Oxford University, where Evans-Pritchard mainly taught: John Davis (social anthropology), Wendy James (social anthropology), Peter Riviere (social anthropology), and Keith Thomas (history).

## **Chapter 2**

### ***Anthropology and the Social Sciences***

This chapter discusses the early period of Evans-Pritchard as a social anthropologist. As briefly given in Appendix 1 (A Short Biography of E. E. Evans-Pritchard), he did not start his academic life with this subject. Having read history in his undergraduate days and his first postgraduate year, he switched to anthropology. This chapter deals with the scope of his early works in social anthropology, particularly under the influence of Malinowski. It briefly traces the history of British anthropology up to the modern program to which Evans-Pritchard was introduced when he entered this new field, then moves on to his subsequent rebellion against Malinowski, one of the leading anthropologists at that time. The core argument of this chapter is Evans-Pritchard's early ideas on social anthropology as "a science".

#### **1. British anthropology before Evans-Pritchard**

Before focusing on the central theme of this chapter, or Evans-Pritchard's early period, it is necessary to illustrate his intellectual background linked to the history of British anthropology, particularly with regard to the modern theoretical and methodological domain in which Evans-Pritchard experienced his preliminary training for this field.

Many introductory texts start talking about Victorian science when it comes to the history of anthropology. Urry (1993) states that 'for much of the period before the 1880's, it is difficult to talk about "anthropology" as an established field of knowledge or of "anthropologists" as if people belonged to an established "profession" ' (Urry 1993: 3). Ethnology, the original form of anthropology, was already popular in Britain in the 1840s. However British anthropology was allegedly more like "a club" rather than "a scientific establishment". Early anthropology was "an amateur" pursuit based primarily on documentary sources collected by non-professionals such as missionaries, colonial officers and travellers. Indeed, the dawn of anthropology was too crude and



unsystematic to be called an academic field. Such “amateur” interest gradually began to take shape as “a human science” in conjunction with various other sub-fields such as prehistory and human biology.

It is frequently said that Tylor among Victorian scientists was the most important person in the professionalisation of British anthropology ‘to bridge the gap between the ethnology of the 1850s and the anthropology of the 1870s’ (Urry 1993: 4). Tylor (1871) clearly defined that the professional anthropologist studied “culture” among the other sub-fields given above. The 1890s saw a great transformation of professional anthropology. So-called “experts” began to emerge one after another during this period. There were two main streams in British anthropology at that time. The first consisted mainly of natural scientists such as Haddon (a marine zoologist), Rivers (a physiologist) and Seligman (a pathologist). They organised the Cambridge expedition to the Torres Straits between New Guinea and Australia (1898-9), which is often seen as the threshold of intensive field research. Apart from this, Spencer, B. (a biologist) and Gillen (an Australian telegrapher) had already started their fieldwork among the Australian Aborigines (1896-). The other group was a circle of classicists and mythologists. One of the most famous works among this circle is *The Golden Bough* (2 volumes in 1890) by Frazer, based on the cross-cultural comparison of magic, rituals and so on. This study became one of the classical texts in anthropology.

It was also during the Victorian period that the foundation of anthropological theories took place. Anthropologists at this time aimed at formulating anthropological laws, particularly to explain how cultures differed from one another. Some insisted that society developed from one stage to another (social evolutionism). Having been influenced by Darwinism in biology and Lyell in geology, they believed in a unilineal model of “social evolution” along which every society was thought invariably to change. However the pace of evolution was considered to be different from one culture to another. Social evolutionists maintained that the difference in pace caused cultural diversity. By comparing one society with others, evolutionists assumed that their own society, or Western civilisation, had reached the most advanced stage, while so-called “primitive societies” were still in the early stages of evolution. Anthropologists who had a sociological perspective were likely to advocate this theory (e.g. Frazer, Spencer, H.).

Arguing against evolutionists, some others asserted that societies changed not independently, but through contact with other cultures. This paradigm was advanced mainly by ethnologists such as Rivers and Eliott Smith. They claimed that cultural traits were borrowed and introduced from one culture to another, and this “culture-contact” brought social change and diversity (diffusionism). With the aid of archaeological facts, diffusionists saw ancient civilisations such as Egypt as “the origin” from which cultural significance was spread to the neighbouring areas like ripples on the surface of a pond. Thus they compared various cultural traits, which were assumed to have diffused from that point of “culture-origin”.

These early orientations were literally the genesis of professional anthropology both in terms of theory and method. Although the emphasis of each theory differed, they were similar in the attempts to formulate laws of social diversity or how cultures varied from one another. Both social evolutionism and diffusionism were commonly based on the comparison of cultures. They were, however, equally weak paradigms in the light of ethnographic facts: both of them were commonly based on haphazard and hypothetical speculation without empirical research and systematic analysis. Many anthropologists at that time had still relied on the “indirect” data collected by non-professionals. “Armchair anthropologists”, who did not carry out fieldwork while formulating theories, still predominated in the dawn of professional anthropology until the beginning of this century.

In 1922 British anthropology experienced a dramatic moment in its history. It is often commemorated as the dawn of “modern anthropology”, signalled by the publication of two ethnographies: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* by Malinowski and *The Andaman Islanders* by Radcliffe-Brown. These anthropologists are often remembered as the co-founders of social anthropology in Britain and their works are said to have brought a methodological breakthrough to anthropology. Indeed their success lay in developing anthropological methods and analysis: empirical methods and systematic theorisation. Malinowski is frequently thought to have contributed to the former, Radcliffe-Brown to the latter. Nevertheless they made a methodological revolution in anthropology which spread beyond Britain.

In contrast to their predecessors, Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's unique methodologies lay in empirical research and a sociological perspective. They achieved an intensive field method by concentrating on a single society through participant observation. They were also influenced by Durkheim, a French sociologist who was the first to study society as a system. It is natural that both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, who gained the technique of intensive field research, readily took over the Durkheimian perspective and developed it in their anthropological study. Especially Radcliffe-Brown was the more passionate successor of French sociology, thus he is often called "a British Durkheim".

The empirical method and sociological perspective caused their anthropological theories to focus more on "society" rather than "culture", and thus not on cultural changes or variation, but on social stability and uniformity (see also Chapter 4: Anthropology and History). Their theoretical orientation was intended to explain the "function" of social institutions. Based on Durkheim's sociology, they assumed that social institutions had functions to maintain the solidarity of society (Functionalism). Although Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown developed functional frameworks on their own, functionalism itself was innovative and more persuasive than the preceding theories, for it was built upon empirical and systematic analysis. Functionalists were thus thought to be "more scientific" than social evolutionists and diffusionists.

Although both are commonly seen as fathers of modern social anthropology, each had a distinctive role in the modern anthropological program. Malinowski often appears as the pioneer of anthropological fieldwork even today. 'The Malinowskian revolution transformed the relationship between the ethnographer and the theorist' (Kuper 1996:32). Having drawn primarily on the indirect data supplied by amateur anthropologists, this subject was still seen as a separate discipline from experimental sciences, at least until Malinowski emerged. He was indeed the first anthropologist who achieved the equalisation of ethnographic facts with anthropological theories (see also the following section entitled: 2. Malinowskian anthropology).

The institutionalisation of the modern British school and its tradition of systematic analysis owe more to Radcliffe-Brown. Anthropology previously consisted of the various studies such as ethnology, prehistoric archaeology and many others. It was

Radcliffe-Brown that thoroughly classified these sub-fields and established social anthropology in the strict sense. He defined this subject as a kind of comparative enterprise of sociology, for it dealt primarily with social phenomena (see also the following section entitled: 5. Evans-Pritchard's intellectual shift from Malinowski to Radcliffe-Brown: from function to structure).

Indeed each of them played a distinctive role in modern anthropology, although they are collectively regarded as the founding fathers of modern social anthropology. When Evans-Pritchard started his anthropological career, the British school was dominated by these two anthropologists, particularly by Malinowski.

## **2. Malinowskian anthropology**

It is almost impossible to talk about the modern anthropological program without referring to Malinowski: Kuper (1996) states that 'Almost all of the first generation of anthropology students in the functionalist era passed through Malinowski's seminars' (Kuper 1996: 66). Malinowski can be seen as one of the first teachers who formulated Evans-Pritchard's early scope in his anthropological profession. Evans-Pritchard started to read anthropology at the London School of Economics (or the LSE) in 1924. Kuper (1996) considers this school to be the sole school that established social anthropology firmly in the modern sense (Kuper 1996: 80). There were, of courses, other universities to offer anthropological courses such as Oxford, Cambridge, University College London. However the LSE was allegedly regarded as a kind of "training centre of field methods" at that time. This reputation owed much to Malinowski, who had just started teaching there in 1924. A number of students such as Firth and Schapera were inspired by his masterly ethnography and joined his seminar with enthusiasm.

As briefly mentioned in the preceding section (1. British anthropology before Evans-Pritchard), Malinowski is often regarded as one of the co-founders of modern anthropology, although this reputation is due more to his "performance" in the field. Indeed his outstanding field methods distinguishes this Polish ethnographer in the development of British anthropology. Urry (1993) implicitly remarks Malinowski's achievement in the history of fieldwork: 'Commentators on the development of social

anthropological methods have usually considered the emphasis on field techniques to be an innovation of the early twentieth century' (Urry 1993:17). Malinowski's methodology paved the way for this subject to access local life at an individual level. As Fortes (1957) says:

What is significant [in Malinowski's fieldwork] is the emphasis on *practice* (the activity; the behaviour; the concrete mutual services; the exhibited self-interest, ambition, and variety; the facts of mother love and paternal affection; in short the actions and feelings and thoughts of individuals in social situations, as directly observed by the ethnographer and as admitted by the actors) as the 'reality' of social life, as against 'ideal' or 'theory', the mere verbal formulation. ...

... The excellence of British ethnographic fieldwork since Malinowski set the standard and laid down the methods is due chiefly to his insistence on 'concrete' data.

(Fortes 1957:160-1)

[ ] is my own.

As frequently stated, Malinowski's field methods are contrasted to his predecessors'. Apparently "fieldwork" was not a new method in anthropology and some had already carried it out by that time (e.g. the Cambridge Torres expedition, Spencer & Gillen etc.). However it was not until Malinowski that the intimate and direct inquiry began to be carried out. Layton (1997) appraises Malinowski's ethnographic style: 'He describes his personal experiences in vivid prose, quotes the islander's statements at length, and makes it clear where he had drawn general conclusions of his own' (Layton 1997:30). Malinowski himself stressed that the anthropological work was to be a concrete and substantial documentation (Malinowski 1922: 1-25). Indeed his reputation was built upon his empirical and factual data reflected in the anthropological theory.

Evans-Pritchard (1960[1951]) regards this teacher as 'the more thorough fieldworker' than the other founding father: 'He not only spent a longer period than any anthropologist before him, and I think after him also, in a single study of a primitive people, ..., but he was also the first anthropologist to conduct his research through the native language, as he was the first to live throughout his work in the centre of native life' (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]:74). Some senior anthropologists might remember Malinowski's field methods as the best ethnographic inquiry at that time: Kuper (1996) sees him as 'the only master ethnographer in the country, and virtually everyone who wished to do fieldwork in the modern fashion went to work with him (Kuper 1996:1). It

is doubtless that Malinowski's reputation as a prominent anthropologist lay more in his thorough method which reflected the field experience in his anthropological writings.

Malinowski's anthropological theory, however, was not as illuminating as his field methods: '... Malinowski's gifts as a field-worker were not matched by any gifts for systematic thought' (Pocock 1971[1961]: 52). It is obvious that Malinowski's theory immediately reveals its weakness when it comes to anthropological analysis. His distinctive fieldwork, at first, seemed the best method for a successful ethnographic inquiry, but it did not follow systematic analysis or theorisation.

Basically, Malinowski's functional theory claimed that cultural or social phenomena existed in order primarily to satisfy the basic human needs. Layton states that 'Malinowski considered that culture was founded on the biological needs of individuals, providing a reference point between simple and complex societies' (Layton 1997: 33). Malinowski believed that magic and religion, for instance, had a kind of social function to control human states of mind: 'Both magic and religion arise and function in situations of emotional stress: crises of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries, unhappy love and unsatisfied hate' (Malinowski 1954[1925]:87). That is, according to Malinowski's theory, the function of social institutions was tied to the satisfaction of biological and psychological desires.

Since Malinowski regarded society as existing ultimately for the satisfaction of biological and individual needs, his functionalism lacked a comprehensive analysis of society. Kuper (1996) expresses Malinowski's theory as follows: 'His monographs recall the spiritual, "The toe bone is connected to foot bone, The foot bone is connected to the ankle bone," etc.- very just, but not a theory of anatomy (Kuper 1996: 22). Leach (1976) explained Malinowskian orthodox paradigm as of the 'everything fits together like the gearwheels of a watch' variety...' (Leach 1976: 6). Malinowski tried to explain the "function" of social customs, but it was innocent of the collective level. That is, his functional theory was not oriented from the viewpoint of society "as a whole". This theoretical weakness was due to the absence of sociological analysis. Thus it is obvious that his theory could not give the sociological explanation of cultural phenomena: Malinowski used the concept of "function" in a biological or psychological context.

Malinowski's disinterest in society as a whole led eventually to the loss of his theoretical successors. 'Looking for a more promising theoretical partner for functionalist ethnography, young scholars ... began to turn to the comparative sociology of Radcliffe-Brown' (Kuper 1996: 34). Many anthropologists, although enlightened by his field method, consequently came to disagree with his theoretical orientation. Evans-Pritchard was the one who immediately moved away from Malinowski in the early 1930s (Goody 1995: 58).

### **3. Evans-Pritchard's criticism of Malinowski: 'Anthropology and the Social Sciences'**

Evans-Pritchard's disagreement with Malinowski seemingly took place soon after his introductory training at the LSE. Some of his early essays show reasons why he rejected this teacher. Like his colleagues, Evans-Pritchard occasionally criticises Malinowski's functional analysis as lacking in systematic and sociological abstraction.

One point which Evans-Pritchard makes on Malinowski is his crude generalisation, which lacks a thorough examination of other empirical data. Evans-Pritchard's 'Anthropology and the Social Sciences' (1937a) implicitly criticises Malinowski as shown below:

Social Anthropology being an inductive science, uses, or ought to use, the comparative methods employed in the natural sciences. ...

The present habit of anthropologists of generalising from the facts of a single isolated society, is contrary to the methods of inductive logic which have been found necessary in the natural sciences.

(Evans-Pritchard 1937a:71-2)

Here Evans-Pritchard remarks that Malinowski's functional orientation does not follow the methodological "etiquette" of social anthropology as a "science". Depending primarily on the ethnographic data of the society he studied, Malinowski's theories were, as Evans-Pritchard remarks, often over-simplified and generic. Indeed

Malinowski drew his functional paradigm out of his own ethnographic data of the Trobriand without comparing other similar cases or reports by other anthropologists.

Evans-Pritchard's 'Anthropology and the Social Sciences' (1937a) was originally presented at a conference for the social sciences. This conference 'aimed at solving the problems of the division and classification of the sciences, and of the mutual relations of the various sciences ...' as E. Baker, one of the contributors stated (Baker 1937: 7). Here Evans-Pritchard mainly discusses the role of social anthropology as one branch of the social sciences. This essay clearly maintains that social anthropology is "an observational science", whose values lie in 'the volume and reliability' of facts, and thus it is 'a purely inductive study-to make theories subordinate to facts, and not facts subordinate to theories' (Evans-Pritchard 1937a: 66-7). That is, generalisation in social anthropology, for him, should be made in the same manner as the natural scientists do. Although the anthropological field research is essentially intensive, theories should be drawn by the inductive examination of the relevant phenomena all over the world: when an anthropologist attempts to generalise a social phenomenon, s/he must examine as much of the available data as possible. Malinowski's theorisation, however, rests solely on his Trobriand data, so it is apparently lacking in inductive and comparative depth. His functional theory can seldom present anthropological laws that can be applicable to many cases around the world, Evans-Pritchard argues.

Before the criticism above, Evans-Pritchard has already remarked Malinowski's theoretical poverty. *The Morphology and Function of Magic* (1967[1929]) is an attempt to argue against Malinowski from a different angle from the one given above. The beginning of the essay outlines Evans-Pritchard's explicit challenge to Malinowski's functional orientation:

A working hypothesis should never be allowed to become a settled conviction until it has been tested and re-tested, ...

... I shall attempt to demonstrate in this paper that the principles of magic deduced from Melanesian data and formulated as general laws for all societies have, in view of a study of African peoples, to be reformulated and possibly modified.

(Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 1-2)



The Melanesian data, needless to say, relates to Malinowski's famous ethnographic account on the Trobrianders. "The principle of magic" refers probably to the functional law, or theory which Malinowski "deduced" from his own field data. Evans-Pritchard attempts to reveal Malinowski's ignorance of sociological analysis. This criticism is based on the comparison between Malinowski's work (e.g. 1922, 1954[1925]) and Evans-Pritchard's own field research among the Azande in Central Africa.

Evans-Pritchard first clarifies Malinowski's interpretation of the role of magic in Melanesia: 'Professor Malinowski was the first writer to demonstrate clearly from a detailed study wherein lies the function of magic. He showed how magic filled a gap left by lack of knowledge in man's pragmatic pursuits, ... , and how it provided an alternative means of expression for thwarted human desires, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 3). In other word, Malinowski attempted to explain that magic and spells were fundamentally determined by human practical needs or basic desires. He called this cause-and-effect relationship "function". Obviously his concept of function refers chiefly to the works for the biological and psychological fulfilment of human desires at the individual level. Evans-Pritchard argues against this interpretation by revealing its weakness. If all the social or cultural phenomena were determined by the human basic desires, it would be impossible to explain the diversified forms and functions of social phenomena between cultures. Malinowski's functional theory would be indeed vulnerable when such cultural diversity is concerned.

What Evans-Pritchard alternatively claims is that social phenomena must be studied strictly from the sociological point of view, for they are, by and large, the reflection of social relationships, and thus the structure of society is an essential key to understand their functions. Evans-Pritchard therefore attempts to relate various forms of social phenomena to the custom of magic both in Melanesia and Africa. In Evans-Pritchard's view, Malinowski's theory is lacking in analysis of this kind, or structural analysis to abstract the social skeleton consisting of numerous relationships. The social skeleton is the social structure constituting a culture or a society as a whole.

As the clue for this structural understanding of the function of magic, Evans-Pritchard raises some basic cultural factors which should be correlated, namely "the sociological distribution and balance" (e.g. units of community life, marriage life and political

system) and “the means of resource” (e.g. modes of production such as agriculture, hunting-and-gathering). He groups these cultural ingredients together as “the morphology of society” (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 2). The difference in social morphology between the Melanesia and Africa can be determined from the data set out in Chart 1 below:

**Chart 1: The social morphology in Melanesia and Africa**

	Melanesia ( the Trobrianders)	Africa ( the Azande)
The geographic location	South Pacific coral island	Central Africa vast inland
The communal unit	village	homestead
The communal undertakings/ labour	agriculture trading expeditions warfare public ceremonial	fewer communal undertakings
Political unit (& the leader)	chief, who rules over the district	prince, who governs a larger area
The balance of political power	chiefs do not wield great executive power	chief-deputies of internal sections exercise great power
The form of marriage & family inheritance	patrilocal & matrilineal	patrilocal & patrilineal
The main economic activities	agriculture & fishing	Gardening hunting & gathering little fishing

(source: Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 2-3)

The social morphology, which includes political, economic and social organisations, influences and determines the distinctive forms and function of magic in each area.

In fact these social factors or cultural ingredients are closely related to the custom of magic respectively in Melanesia and Africa. The form of magical spells is, for example,

contrasted between these two societies. In Melanesia spells are practised by certain specialists and secretly transmitted from generation to generation without losing the original formula. The spells among the Azande, on the other hand, are more flexibly inherited in the familiar form and the knowledge of spells itself is accessible to everybody. Here Evans-Pritchard asserts that these differences show concomitant variation with the social morphology in each area. The study of a social phenomenon, for Evans-Pritchard, aims to discover structural coherence by studying relevant phenomena systematically. 'The form of spell is dependent upon social causes not to be found in a study of magic itself save in relation to the whole society and culture in which it is practised' (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 7).

Added to the ways of inheritance of spells, Evans-Pritchard raises other differences in such concomitant variations relating to the customs and practice of magic between Melanesia and Africa: the emphasis on different elements of the magic, which is also represented in linguistic symbols, the presence or absence of specific myths to transcend the importance of magic (see also Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 9-12) and some significant others. These cultural differences lead to a conclusion about the distinctive functions of magic in these areas.

If all the more important magic is in the hands of a few individuals in any society, the logical inference to be drawn is that the wider spread the magic the less important the social function it fulfils; the more the performance of magic becomes public property, the less social utility it possesses.

(Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 16-7)

Evans-Pritchard has reached this conclusion through his structural analysis correlating the various aspects of magic and spells to social relationships, particularly in the political context of each area. Indeed the social morphology which he appreciates plays an important role in grasping the function of magic in each area. Evans-Pritchard states the contrast of the role of magic between these areas: '... the Trobriand chief uses magic as part of his machinery of government, whereas the Zande chief does not use this weapon of chastisement, ... this difference can readily be understood when the position of the chief is known in both societies' (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 19). As Chart 1 above shows, the Trobriander chief has little political control over the common people,

thus it is necessary for him to display his power on a regular basis. The Zande counterpart (prince), on the other hand, does not have to do so, for his political triumphs and privileges are well-recognised and overwhelming among the commoners.

Social relationships such as family-and-kinship and community life affect the different tradition of magic in these areas, too. The Trobriander's spells, for instance, are strictly transmitted from mother's brothers to their sister's sons according to the principle of matrilineal descent, whereas the spells among the Azande are handed over without such restriction. It is assumed that the absence of communal undertakings in Zandeland resulted in the absence of mutual social ties between neighbours, which causes constant scepticism among them. It is magic that controls such social hostility. 'It is clear that the communal garden magic of the Trobrianders is absent from Zande life because the Azande do not cultivate their gardens by joint labour' (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]:19). Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937b) further discusses how magic is critical among the Azande (see also the section titled: 2. Case Study: Azande witchcraft in Chapter 5).

What is most notable in this study is the structural analysis of the function of magic. The magic and spells are strictly monopolised among the practitioners in Trobriand, while they are freely accessible to almost everybody in Zandeland. Thus the function of magic in Melanesia can be seen as more authoritative than in Zandeland. Evans-Pritchard concludes that social phenomena are closely related to each other and constitute a single collective unity. Indeed the difference in social structure patterns distinctive forms and functions of cultural phenomena.

Evans-Pritchard's structural analysis is, above all, a trenchant criticism of Malinowskian anthropology. Clearly Malinowski was not interested in structural correlation as Evans-Pritchard emphasises. Kuper (1996) acutely states 'Malinowski, ..., seldom attempted structural analyses, preferring to focus on the strategies of individual actors'(Kuper 1996: 28). By condemning Malinowski's neglect of the sociological perspective, Evans-Pritchard ends his paper with his view of anthropological work: 'It is one of the aims of social anthropology to interpret all differences in the form of a typical social institution by reference to difference in social structure' (Evans-Pritchard 1967[1929]: 22). That is, Evans-Pritchard believes that the

function of social phenomena must be contemplated in relation to other social phenomena and social structure as a whole (see also the section titled: 2. Case study: Azande witchcraft, (2) The methodological significance: sociological abstraction in Chapter 5).

#### **4. Evans-Pritchard's early idea: social anthropology as "a science" in terms of methodological rigor**

The two arguments above primarily show Evans-Pritchard's explicit rebellion against the crude functional orientation of Malinowski. These essays also represent Evans-Pritchard's early standpoint of social anthropology as "a scientific pursuit".

The term "science" used here should not be thought of in the orthodox usage of the term to refer to the specific subjects such as Physics and Biology. Nor is it the theoretical concern about the nature of organic and non-organic phenomena. Evans-Pritchard's use of "science" in social anthropology is fundamentally methodological, not theoretical. It means that the anthropological analysis should be accompanied with methodological rigour. By condemning Malinowski's over-simplification, Evans-Pritchard stresses the importance of inductive speculation for formulating "theories" in society and general laws of society. This perspective is similar to that of the natural sciences in terms of a rigorous contemplation of theory subordinating facts. The first argument, in this sense, refers to such methodological rigour and precision.

The latter argument demonstrates Evans-Pritchard's enthusiasm for the structural analysis of social institutions. He seems to have believed, probably since his anthropological training at the LSE, that social anthropology deals with the sociological, or collective aspect of culture. Despite having been inspired by Durkheim, Malinowski's anthropological theory gave up sociological analysis, and thus formulated a less comprehensive theory of culture or society. As long as an anthropologist is studying 'societies', s/he ought to consider the subject-matter an integrated whole. Putting more emphasis on the biological or individual aspect, Malinowski's functional theory apparently failed in the structural understanding of social phenomena. Apart from the specific topic discussed above, Evans-Pritchard has occasionally criticised the

absence of structural analysis in Malinowski's functional orientation in other papers (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 95-6; 1981: 198). Later Evans-Pritchard (1960[1951]) defines the primal concerns of social anthropology:

Social anthropology has quite a different task to perform. It studies, ..., social behaviour, generally in institutionalized forms, such as the family, kinship systems, political organisation, legal procedures, religious cults, and the like, and the relations between such institutions; ...

(Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 5)

Social anthropology as the sociological study, particularly of "primitive societies" should have the same holistic scope as Durkheim's sociology. The topic which this subject chiefly studies is, at least for this young anthropologist, the collective aspect of social or cultural phenomena. Malinowski's theoretical formulation is unacceptable with regard to this principle. In this sense, Evans-Pritchard's early idea of his profession as "a science" might be replaced by his scholarly stricture.

## **5. Evans-Pritchard's intellectual shift from Malinowski to Radcliffe-Brown: from function to structure**

Generally speaking, Malinowski's "less structural" analysis seemed to be the main reason for Evans-Pritchard (and other anthropological contemporaries) to reject him. Hatch (1973) clearly says that 'Evans-Pritchard turned away from Malinowski's framework early in his career, for he came under the influence of the social structural approaches of ... Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, ...' (Hatch 1973: 313). Thus Evans-Pritchard moved on to Radcliffe-Brown, the other founding father, who was also prominent in structural analysis.

Evans-Pritchard's intellectual shift from Malinowski to Radcliffe-Brown indicates that the weakness of the former was the strength of the latter. Radcliffe-Brown was indeed superior to Malinowski at theoretical speculation. They were equally enlightened by Durkheimian sociology, but their theoretical interests contrasted. Malinowski stressed the more biological and psychological function of social phenomena, whereas Radcliffe-Brown focused on sociological and structural (or collective) aspects. Radcliffe-Brown was also more rigorous and systematic in analysis

than Malinowski, who attracted few theoretical successors. Firth (1957), one of few pupils who does not repudiate Malinowski, clearly states that Malinowski did not match the intellectual climate of British social anthropology at that time, which needed 'a clearer structural approach to give more precision to many anthropological generalizations' (Firth 1957: 1).

After Malinowski's reign, Radcliffe-Brown had been the precursor of structural analysis in British anthropology. Evans-Pritchard's rejection of Malinowskian anthropology paralleled the overall shift from function to structure as the central theme in the modern British school. The institutional predominance of the LSE declined and Oxford took over as a new centre of British anthropology when Radcliffe-Brown was appointed as the Chair in 1937. Evans-Pritchard, needless to say, was one of the staff members of this new centre.

Ethnographies after Malinowski's reign reveal the overwhelming influence of structural analysis in the modern British school. Kuper (1996) states that 'there is a period of 'functionalist' studies in the 1930s; ... after 1940, a wave of neo-Radcliffe-Brownian studies (Kuper 1996: 68-9). Under the name of Structural-functionalism, a number of young anthropologists had made numerous studies. Evans-Pritchard, as one of the most enthusiastic anthropologists, presented some prominent studies, both in his own scholarly development and the theoretical development of British social anthropology (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1940a). *African Political Systems* (1940), co-edited by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes and prefaced by Radcliffe-Brown, was the culmination of structural analysis by the modern British school which endeavoured, as Kuper (1996) says, 'to make perhaps its most original contribution to the social sciences and political philosophy' (Kuper 1996: 81).

Goody (1995) presents, in one of his latest essays, various anecdotes about Evans-Pritchard's hostility to Malinowski, which seemed not purely intellectual all the time. In fact, Evans-Pritchard's friendship with Fortes and rapprochement with Radcliffe-Brown were alleged to be his strategies to "battle" against Malinowski. Goody further states 'Evans-Pritchard (and Fortes) believed in an anthropology that was purer, more scholarly, more scientific than Malinowski's, at once more theoretical and more empirically validated' (Goody 1995:77). The correspondence between these two

anthropologists vividly shows their ambitious scheme to establish quite a different atmosphere of anthropological enterprise from that established by Malinowski. 'Oxford seemed a possibility for both of them when Radcliffe-Brown arrived as Professor of Social Anthropology in 1937 (Goody 1995:77).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter focused mainly on Evans-Pritchard's early anthropological career. The brief history of British anthropology was given in order to trace the intellectual track from the early anthropological program to Malinowski, who was probably the first influential teacher to motivate Evans-Pritchard's own outlook to his profession. The two essays presented as Evans-Pritchard's antithesis of Malinowski also represented his early idea about social anthropology as "a science", or a systematic and holistic study of society.

Evans-Pritchard had never reconsidered Malinowski's work throughout his life: 'I never got on with Malinowski, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1973: 19). Having primarily rested on the biological and psychological aspects of social phenomena, Malinowski's functionalism failed in the structural, and thus comprehensive understanding of culture or society as a whole. In this way it failed to be passed on to immediate followers<sup>2</sup>.

It is true that Evans-Pritchard had no intellectual brotherhood with Malinowski. This chapter, however, assumed that Malinowski was one of the most important figures to encourage Evans-Pritchard to elaborate structural analysis, and subsequently his humanistic orientation in social anthropology. After Malinowski's reign at the LSE, Evans-Pritchard had moved toward Radcliffe-Brown, who grounded the tradition of structural analysis. Then, this young anthropologist gradually transformed his own scope of this field, which will be discussed in the following chapters.



## **Chapter 3**

### ***The Marett Lecture***

The previous chapter dealt primarily with Evans-Pritchard's early ideas and works in social anthropology, particularly his antithesis to Malinowski's functional orientation. After turning away from this prominent ethnographer, he moved to Radcliffe-Brown, the other founding father of modern British social anthropology. This chapter discusses the subsequent challenge of Evans-Pritchard to Radcliffe-Brown after his intellectual affinity with him. The Marett lecture of 1950 represents the first explicit announcement of Evans-Pritchard's own idea about social anthropology as one of the humanities, which opposes Radcliffe-Brown, who saw the subject as a natural science of society.

#### **1. The Marett Lecture**

In 1950 Evans-Pritchard delivered a lecture in Oxford about his own perspective on social anthropology. This is the Marett Lecture (1962[1950]), which is frequently seen as "a milestone" in the history of British anthropology. Not a few anthropologists have quoted and discussed this lecture (e.g. Smith 1962; Schapera 1962 etc.). The focal point is his criticism of social anthropology, which had made a considerable progress, especially the developments in theory, methodology and disciplines in the last three decades.

Added to Evans-Pritchard's own standpoint in social anthropology, this lecture tells how this subject had come under the predominant influence of functional theories at least in England. As the sub-title (Social Anthropology: Past and Present) connotes, Evans-Pritchard narrates "the history of anthropology": it can be traced back to French and Scottish scholars in the eighteenth century, then moves on to Victorian anthropologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and reaches functional

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<sup>2</sup> In the late 1960s, scholars such as Barth rebelled against Structural-functionalism, and initiated a revival in Malinowski's emphasis on the strategies followed by individual members of society. See also Layton (1997)

anthropologists. It explains primarily how these earlier anthropological interests came to be organised and took shape as an academic subject.

This history of anthropology shows what these earlier anthropologists, including modern scholars, have invariably pursued. Although the theoretical orientation has changed throughout the development, their anthropological goal, or the pursuit for the “scientific” laws of societies has more or less not changed. In the process of professionalisation, numerous anthropologists have sought chiefly for this goal in the same ways natural scientists did. The Scottish moral philosophers in the eighteenth century, for instance, had a view to study societies as natural systems or organisms with empirical and the inductive rigor (Evans-Pritchard 1962 [1950]:14). In a word, social anthropologists have carried out their research in the hope of the establishment of their profession as “a natural science of Man”.

The part on ‘the functional theory’(pp.19-20) is probably the most critical point in the Marett Lecture. Schapera (1962) sees the core argument of this lecture as ‘a critique of the functional or organismic theory of society then dominating British social anthropology’ (Schapera 1962:143). Here Evans-Pritchard critically assesses functionalists in terms of their anthropological aim. Functionalism was indeed innovative in terms of its empirical and systematic analysis. This grand theory, however, embraced exactly the same ambition as many of their anthropological precursors had. Modern functional anthropologists took over the earlier anthropological aim, or the pursuit for “scientific” laws of societies.

Evans-Pritchard argues against such a “natural scientific” goal among his ancient and senior colleagues, particularly that of the functionalists. It is, for Evans-Pritchard, a kind of tabulation. That is, social anthropology as a natural science is likely to be based on generalisation, or the study of universal or similar aspects of society rather than unique or particular ones. Evans-Pritchard disagrees with such an anthropological program in the light of the fact that societies are in some aspects unique as well as being similar. The claim that: ‘... it is difficult to reconcile the assertion that a society has come to be what it is by a succession of unique events with the claim that what it is can be comprehensively stated in terms of natural law (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 20). Thus the natural scientific pursuit invariably turns out to be ‘too general to be of value’

(Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 20). The Marett Lecture criticises such an aim for anthropological generalisation which had been more or less predominant since the dawn of anthropology.

In this sense, Evans-Pritchard does not accept either of his functional precursors, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, who both commonly attempted to establish the general laws of social phenomena. Evans-Pritchard harshly criticises them: 'In its extreme form functional determinism leads to absolute relativism and makes nonsense not only of the theory itself but of all thought' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 20). Putting more emphasis on the natural scientific analogies, functionalists in fact studied social institutions solely within their functional paradigm, and thus never allowed other possible modes of explanation to refine their view about the nature of society.

Condemning such "natural scientific" orientation among functionalists, Evans-Pritchard claims that this subject is not a science, but one of the humanities.

... social anthropology ... studies societies as moral system not as natural systems, ... is interested in design rather than in process, and ... therefore seeks patterns and not scientific laws, and interprets rather than explains.

(Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 26)

As a practical analogy of the humanistic feature, Evans-Pritchard asserts that '... social anthropology is a kind of historiography, and therefore ultimately of philosophy or art...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 26). This analogy, which he discussed in the previous section of the Marett Lecture ('Anthropology and History' pp.20-25), means that this subject fundamentally attempts a kind of descriptive integration (of peoples or societies) as the authentic historian does (see also Chapter 4). In the following year Evans-Pritchard stresses the same attitude in the series of BBC broadcasts, which aimed to popularise the subject (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]).

It is obvious that the purpose of Evans-Pritchard's Marett Lecture was to declare his own humanistic standpoint in social anthropology. In this sense, he was equally harsh to both founding fathers of modern anthropology. Malinowski, however, had already become less influential when Evans-Pritchard delivered this lecture. That is, his

criticism of functionalists focused primarily on Radcliffe-Brown, who was then dominant in the modern British school.

Radcliffe-Brown's rigid discipline in social anthropology stemmed primarily from the Natural Sciences and sociology. In his undergraduate days, he read pre-medical science for a year in Birmingham, then moved to Cambridge to study Mental and Moral science and experimental psychology. During this period, he met Rivers and Haddon, who were then prominent Cambridge ethnologists. Under the supervision of Rivers, Radcliffe-Brown carried out fieldwork in the Andaman Islands to make a typical ethnological analysis of culture. Meanwhile he gradually shifted from ethnology to sociology, particularly that of Durkheim. In other word, Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological focus moved on to "society" rather than "culture". These preliminary disciplines formulated Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological style, which concentrated more on sociological analysis with the methodological rigor of natural sciences, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.

Radcliffe-Brown presented more systematic and persuasive functional theories than Malinowski. Kuper (1996) states that 'The outstanding feature of Radcliffe-Brown's mature work is its single-mindedness. ... His strength lay in his clarity, his certitude and his dedication. These enabled him to win disciples' (Kuper 1996 : 63). Strictly regarding social anthropology as "a natural science" of society, Radcliffe-Brown elaborated anthropological theories in the rigorous sociological and natural scientific styles. His analysis thus attracted not a few students who hoped to learn his methods of analysis after attending Malinowski's seminar of field methods. "Social structure", for which Radcliffe-Brown chiefly sought, was the main concern among British social anthropologists, particularly during the 1940's (see also the section titled: 4. Case Study: Evans-Pritchard's historical anthropology: *Sanusi of Cyrenaica*' in Chapter 4). *African Political Systems* (1940), edited by M. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard and prefaced by Radcliffe-Brown, is the culmination of structural analysis in the modern British school. Indeed Radcliffe-Brown came to hold an anthropological charisma, which was dominant over the decade 1945-1955 (Leach 1976:1).

Evans-Pritchard had followed Radcliffe-Brown's discipline at least until 1946 when he became Professor of social anthropology in Oxford. Kuper (1996) states that Evans-Pritchard's inaugural lecture in 1948 was apparently 'an orthodox Radcliffe-Brownian performance' (Kuper 1996: 124). His Marett lecture was, in this sense, an unexpected rebellion against Radcliffe-Brown's domination in this field.

## **2. Totemism: Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard**

The Marett Lecture is one of the key theoretical texts to understand Evans-Pritchard's humanistic orientation especially in his later anthropological career. In the actual ethnographic study, what distinguish his humanistic pursuit?

Evans-Pritchard's humanistic orientation in social anthropology can be made clearer by contrasting it with Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological analysis. Here we will look at their difference in explaining the same phenomenon: totemism.

### **(1) Radcliffe-Brown's study of totemism: a scientific pursuit**

"Totemism" is the way in which people conceive of the relationship between human society and nature. This cultural phenomenon is indeed one of the classical topics in anthropology (McLennan 1869; Frazer 1910; Durkheim & Mauss 1915; Lévi-Strauss, 1963[1962] et al.) Some non-anthropologists have also attempted to study this phenomenon (e.g. Freud 1965[1913]). Most of these, especially early studies, aimed at explaining this phenomenon as a prototype of religion or a possible stage in human cognitive evolution. Commonly these studies aimed at discovering general laws or classifying similar phenomena in terms of social evolution, primitive mentality and so on.

As it has often been called "British Durkheimianism", Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological analysis was considerably influenced by French sociology. Here we can see Radcliffe-Brown's study of totemism as a development of Durkheim's sociological analysis (1963[1903]).

Durkheim, with Mauss, one of the members of Durkheim's sociological group (or *L'Année sociologique*), (1963[1903]) studied totemism as a social phenomenon, which

confirmed and represented its solidarity. Evolutionary perspective was also at the core of their sociological analysis. They assumed that as the scale of society became larger (social evolution), it came to require some means of social classification. Starting with two fundamental social groups (moieties-see also Radcliffe-Brown's totemic theory of 1958[1951]), these split into four groups (classes), then further diversified to more groups (clans). Durkheim and Mauss assumed that totemism invariably appeared at the third stage of this unilineal model of social evolution as "a diacritical sign of social differentiation", and thus clans were often identified with names of certain natural species. In other word, totemism is a fundamental means of group identification primarily for intertribal transactions such as marriage, according to them. The theoretical formulation of *L'Année sociologique*, although lacking in empirical research of its own, is often seen as one of the pioneering studies on human social classification. Layton (1997) states that 'Durkheim and Mauss' extraordinarily speculative theory makes many unjustifiable assumptions' (Layton 1997: 65). In fact, their work stimulated the following generations and grounded modern grand theories of anthropology ranging from functionalism and structuralism.

In 1929 Radcliffe-Brown presented his totemic theory based on Durkheim's analysis. Beyond Durkheim's sociological orientation, Radcliffe-Brown studied this phenomenon in the broader context, or totemism as the representation of "the ritual relationship between human society and nature". Having put the primal emphasis on social relationship, Durkheimian sociology failed to give a satisfactory answer to the question why natural species were chosen for social classification, which Radcliffe-Brown thinks incomplete (Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]: 125). That is, Radcliffe-Brown did not see totemism merely from the sociological aspect, and thus attempted to explain this phenomenon as the wider relationship between human society and totemic species.

Radcliffe-Brown's totemic theory of 1929 is fundamentally an attempt to incorporate natural order into social order. With this perspective of a dichotomy of society and nature, he investigates a reasonable and logical relationship between peoples and species chosen as totems. Radcliffe-Brown assumes that the empirical factor determines totemic relationships: totemic species are selected not at random, but for their utility to human livelihood primarily as the means of subsistence, and thus they are more

appreciated as clan emblems. About this empirical relationship between man and totems, Radcliffe-Brown states that the human dependency on nature determines their empirical relationship, and thus totemic species are treated as in some way sacred (Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]:127). That is, natural species are chosen as totems not by the immediate necessity of social differentiation, but by their economic utility. These species are necessary to the local livelihood, and thus they are more appreciated and enter into human social classification. Radcliffe-Brown calls this empirical relationship between human society and totemic species “the personification of nature”: ‘A species of animal is personified, i.e. treated for certain purposes as if it were a human being, ... The function of this personification is that it permits nature to be thought of as if it were a society of persons, and so makes of it a social or moral order’ (Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]: 131).

In the process of incorporating natural order into social order, Radcliffe-Brown takes non-totemic societies into consideration, too. He asserts that totemism is merely a particular form of a general relationship between man and nature which can be seen all over the world. Radcliffe-Brown terms this general relationship “the ritual relationship between man and nature”. There are in fact numerous similar customs in non-totemic societies, or the conceptual relationships between the local peoples and certain species. Like totemic societies, these species are often the main resource of their livelihood (e.g. the tortoise to Andaman Islanders, the salmon to Californian Indians, the bear to the peoples of North America and northern Asia etc., and see also Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]: 126-7). In this sense, totemism is a variation of the general, or ritual relationship between man and nature. Radcliffe-Brown thus insists that ‘... totemism is part of a larger whole, and that one important way in which we can characterise this whole is that it provides a representation of the universe as a moral or social order’ (Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]: 131).

Later Radcliffe-Brown referred to this topic again with more methodological rigor (Radcliffe-Brown, 1958[1951]). Although its purpose was methodological (‘The comparative method in social anthropology’ in the Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1951), this essay brought a further elaboration on his study of totemism. Added to the previous speculation (the personification of nature in 1929[1952]), Radcliffe-Brown investigated

totemic phenomena to a deeper level: how systematically the natural order was utilised and reflected in the human social classification. With his rigorous comparison of the relevant phenomena, Radcliffe-Brown found an underlying principle for the general relationship between man and nature: the principle of dual oppositions.

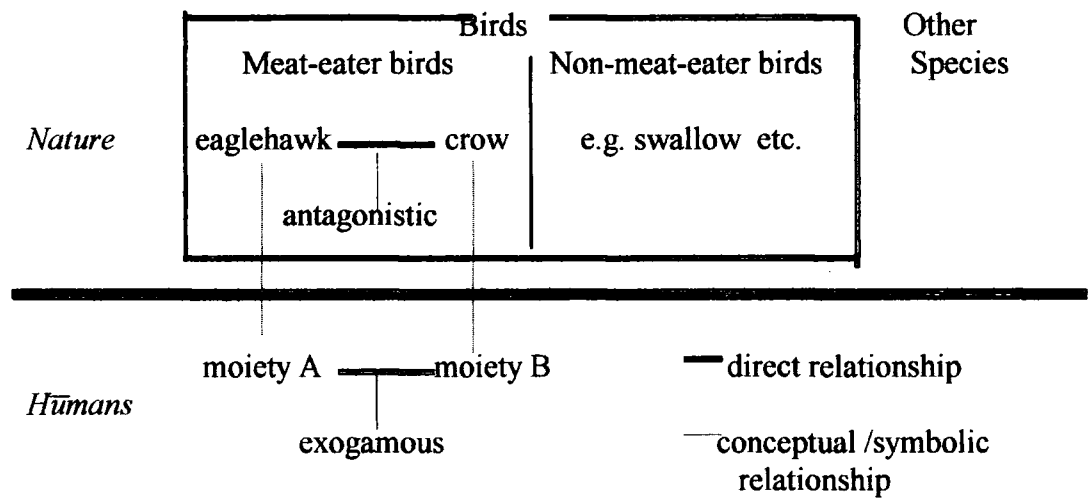
Radcliffe-Brown's second theory of totemism (1958[1951]) presents the concept of "dual oppositions", which is a cosmological way to see two opposing things and representations in the whole universe in terms of pairs (e.g. "right-and-left"). The system of "moieties", for example, or a basic system of dual social division which sees one group and another as a pair and excludes all others, is based on this principle. The single unit often consists of two exogamous moieties. Men of moiety A, who cannot marry women from the same moiety, can marry women of moiety B, and vice versa. The principle of dual division is indeed a fundamental measure to identify these immediate marriageable or unmarriageable clans among the neighbouring groups. Radcliffe-Brown asserts that totemism is built on this concept in identifying human social groups, thus, humans utilise the similar natural analogies to recall their social classification. Radcliffe-Brown, thus, insists that 'The resemblances and differences of animal species are translated into terms of friendship and conflict, solidarity and opposition. In other words the world of animal life is represented in terms of social relations similar to those of human society' (Radcliffe-Brown 1958[1951]: 116).

Take Australia, (where Radcliffe-Brown had actually carried out fieldwork), as an example of his totemic theory based on this principle (1958[1951]). In New South Wales, some tribes consist of two exogamous groups, or moieties (Diagram 1). Their totems are eaglehawk and crow. Here Radcliffe-Brown assumes that these two birds were chosen as their clan totems following the concept of dual opposition. Both of these birds are meat-eaters, but one hunts while the other feeds off dead animals. Their antagonistic nature is also illustrated in the local myth and anecdotes. Based on one shared and one opposite feature, these birds are seen as a pair in the indigenous classification of the natural world, thus they are selected as the totems of two exogamous moieties who eat meat. These two moieties are commonly meat-eaters and the first exogamous groups to each other, thus they are seen as a paired set. As similar examples, Radcliffe-Brown also cites other Australian tribes, the similar cases in



Melanesia and America, ancient Chinese philosophy and so on (see also Radcliffe-Brown 1958[1951]: 119-125).

**Diagram 1: Binary opposition in totemism**  
**‘Eaglehawk and Crow’ in New South Wales, Australia**



### Analysis: Radcliffe-Brown’s perspective and method in totemism

Kuper (1996) states that the subject-matter, totemism was ‘one of Radcliffe-Brown’s preoccupations from the time of his Andaman study’ (Kuper 1996: 54). Radcliffe-Brown’s first theory (totemism as the personification of nature) developed Durkheimian, or a social-functional explanation of this phenomenon, while his second elucidation demonstrated a structural “law” (or binary oppositions) in the selection of totemic species for social classification. In fact the second theory parallels structuralism, another grand theory in modern anthropology developed by Lévi-Strauss. In fact, this French cultural anthropologist demonstrates his own totemic theory with a thorough compliment to Radcliffe-Brown’s speculation (Lévi-Strauss, 1963[1962]).

What is more important in this chapter is Radcliffe-Brown’s viewpoint and methods of analysis, rather than totemism itself. As is frequently said, his significance lies in the systematic pursuit of sociological laws with empirical rigor. Smith (1962) sees Radcliffe-Brown’s perspective and analysis as “anthropological scientism” (Smith

1962: 79). Notably enough in both speculations given above, there are some persisting points which clarify Radcliffe-Brown's natural scientific orientation.

### **I. Society as a natural system**

The idea of society as a natural system is a starting point in Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological analysis. This idea itself originates in the scientific optimism of the nineteenth century in regarding society as a natural system which could be reducible to laws which allow prediction. Pocock (1961) sees such a viewpoint as 'the reintegration of society in nature', which descends from the English empiricists through Spencer to Radcliffe-Brown (Pocock 1971[1961]: 83). Radcliffe-Brown, although he was critical of earlier frameworks in anthropology, took over this principle into his study of social phenomena.

In the Marett Lecture, Evans-Pritchard expresses Radcliffe-Brown's functional orientation as follows: 'Human societies are natural systems in which all parts are interdependent, each serving in a complex of necessary relations to maintain the whole'(Evans-Pritchard 1950[1962]: 19). Both totemic theories above fully represent Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological goal to find natural and organic laws in human social institutions. In the first theory (1952[1929]), Radcliffe-Brown insisted that natural species were utilised as totemic symbols because of their economic utility to the local livelihood. The second theory (1958[1952]) shows his belief in the concept of dual oppositions as a parallel of natural order, which was thus utilised for human social classification. Both attempts are a kind of equalising of human society and the natural world. That is, Radcliffe-Brown saw both society and nature as the ordered and systematic unity. Radcliffe-Brown's first totemic theory (1952[1929]), shows his confidence that the natural order was embedded in moral system:

In modern thought we are accustomed to draw a distinction between the social and the natural order. ... For certain purposes this contrast of society and environment, of man and nature, is useful one, ... From another and very important point of view the natural order enters into and becomes part of the social order.

(Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1929]: 129-30)

## **II. Social anthropology as a natural science of society**

Pocock (1961) further explains Radcliffe-Brown's natural scientific perspective:

'... Radcliffe-Brown which increasingly stresses not only the view that societies are natural systems, that they must be studied by a natural science in the hope of finding laws comparable with those of the natural sciences' (Pocock 1971[1961]: 83). That is, Radcliffe-Brown's 'natural scientific view' was also responsible for his methodological rigour.

Having seen societies as natural systems, Radcliffe-Brown's analysis aimed fundamentally at generalisation as natural scientists attempt. That is, discovering anthropological "laws" was one of his goals. Regarding social anthropology as a generalising science, Radcliffe-Brown rigorously employed some typical methods in natural sciences such as the inductive method and quantitative comparison.

As we have seen above, Radcliffe-Brown's analysis is basically inductive, or an attempt to extract "the general" characteristics from "the specific" features of social institutions. The first speculation (1952[1929]), for example, quoted non-totemic societies to prove that totemism was merely a particular form of the general ritual relationship between man and nature. Inductive speculation was more rigorously demonstrated by comparing more than one case study with others in the second theory (1958[1951]). Indeed Radcliffe-Brown cited the relevant phenomena not only from his own specialised areas (e.g. The Andaman Island, Australia) but also from others areas as given above (see also Radcliffe-Brown 1958[1951]: 121-25). Characteristically Radcliffe-Brown himself repeated that 'social anthropology as an inductive science must rely solely on facts, and on well-authenticated observation of facts' (Radcliffe-Brown 1958:25-6, and see also Radcliffe-Brown 1952). In this sense, Radcliffe-Brown's inductive method is an attempt to embrace as much empirical data as possible in order to establish general and universal laws of society. Through the rigid natural scientific styles of analysis, the ultimate goal of Radcliffe-Brown was a tabulation of all the social phenomena of the world.

From the reasons above, Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological analysis can be seen as a 'scientific' pursuit. He had strictly applied the natural scientific view and methods to

his subject-matter, or societies as natural systems in order to establish social anthropology as a comparative, generalising and law-seeking enterprise. Radcliffe-Brown's totemic theories exhibit the rigid discipline on which he brought a systematic tradition to the modern British school.

## **(2)Evans-Pritchard's study of totemism: a humanistic pursuit**

Evans-Pritchard's study of totemism, although not so well-known as his other studies, makes a notable contrast to earlier studies. It can be seen as an example of his humanistic orientation in ethnographic studies. Here totemism is described rather differently, especially from Radcliffe-Brown's "scientific" explanations given above. Basically Evans-Pritchard investigates totemic phenomena not as natural orders, but as moral phenomena. "Totemism" is a part of his religious study among the Nuer of Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1956). In a word Evans-Pritchard attempts to investigate the Nuer totemism as a part of the entire form of Nuer religious thoughts and practice.

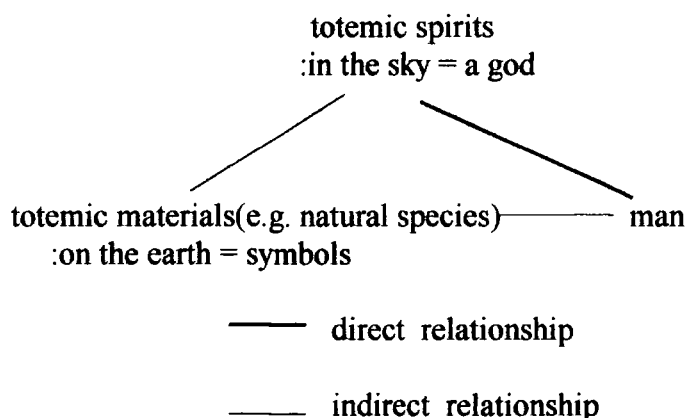
*Kwoth* is one of the key concepts to understand Nuer religion. Evans-Pritchard himself translates this term as "spirit". "Spirit" in Nuer religion emerges in various ways on different occasions. Spirit, which starts with a capital letter in the singular form, refers to an almighty being beyond human power. Evans-Pritchard himself explains that "Spirit" is, 'in its most comprehensive and transcendental sense, as God, the father and creator in the sky' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 91). Spirit, at the same time, appears in the plural form starting with small "s", or "spirits". These spirits usually take material forms such as natural species and utensils. These materials are Nuer totems.

Evans-Pritchard devotes one chapter to the explanation of Nuer totemism (Chapter 3: SPIRITS OF THE BELOW, pp.63-105.). Nuer totems are generally perceived as spirits of the below in which God manifests or represents itself on the earth. In Evans-Pritchard's account, 'God is, properly speaking, not figured in any material representations, ..., though both God and his supra-terrestrial refractions may reveal themselves in signs'(Evans-Pritchard 1956: 123). Here totemic species and materials are merely the means by which the Nuer can conceive the existence of God. About this essential nature of the Nuer totemism, he states that '... it (or Nuer totemism) should be

appreciated that the Nuer respect the natural species or class of objects because they regard them as being in some manner emblems or representations of Spirit' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 77). Nuer totemism is, in a word, the symbolisation of the supernatural being. It is indeed inevitable for the understanding of Nuer religion as a whole.

This characteristic of Nuer totemism, in fact, becomes more clarified with reference to "Spirit". There is actually a clear distinction among the Nuer themselves between "totemic materials" and "totemic spirits". Evans-Pritchard explains that 'while the species are creatures on the earth the spirits are with God in the sky' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 78). That is, totemic materials are merely the symbols of Spirit, thus they play the secondary role in their religious paradigm. Thus, it is not until the concept of *Kwoth*, or Spirit, is informed that the totemic relationship between man and materials among the Nuer can be understood, as Evans-Pritchard repeats. Such triadic relationship between man, totemic spirits and totemic materials is illustrated in Diagram 2.

**Diagram 2: Nuer Totemism:**  
**The association of totemic spirit, man, and totems**



The direct relationship refers to the one on which the Nuer put the first emphasis, while the indirect relationship is subordinate to the direct one. Here the relationship between man and totemic spirits is more appreciated than that between man and totemic material.

These are the preliminary details to understand Nuer totemism. This is a religious phenomenon, and thus ultimately the discourse between Nuer and *Kwoth*. This triadic relationship between man, Spirit and totems shows that Nuer totemism is not the means of social differentiation, nor the ritual relationship between man and nature. Fundamentally Nuer totemism is a spiritual dialogue between man and God.

Clearly Evans-Pritchard has no attempt to make a sociological or natural scientific analysis of Nuer totemism. This is due partly to the religious role which Nuer totemism itself essentially has, and partly to Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic insight to study cultural phenomena as they are perceived by local people. What is Evans-Pritchard's significance in contrast to his precursors' works on totemism? The latter half of the discussion of Evans-Pritchard's account of totemism attempts to make a distinction between him and his precursors, namely Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown.

**-Nuer Totemism not as the means of social differentiation:  
Evans-Pritchard's antithesis to Durkheimian sociological orientation**

Evans-Pritchard's *Nuer religion* is also a critique of the earlier theories of primitive religions as well as being purely an ethnographic description: 'On the one hand, the monograph is a meticulous ethnography of Nuer religious conceptions and rituals. On the other, it is a formidably reasoned attack on the "rationalist" tradition in contemporary anthropology' (Diamond 1957: 127). Durkheim's totemic theory is, needless to say, a contrast to Evans-Pritchard's study of the same phenomena, too.

Evans-Pritchard seems not to have fully agreed with Durkheim's sociological analysis of religion (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1965). As briefly given above, Durkheim's totemic theory drew on the concept of solidarity and social function: Totemism is a social phenomenon as a means of social differentiation for the convenience of intertribal communication. From a different angle from Radcliffe-Brown's totemic theories above, Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer totemism reveals the deficiency of Durkheim's sociological orientation. Diamond (1957) remarks that 'His definitive statement on Nuer religions, ..., assumes an authority that most theoretical analysis of "primitive religions" lack' (Diamond 1957:127).

Like Durkheim's sociological analysis, Nuer totemism takes a collective form (e.g. some social groups such as "lineages" respect totems on their own). Nuer totems are, however, not diacritical signs of social classification. What identify social divisions among the Nuer is 'the names of ancestors and spear-names and honorific titles and not totem' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 92). In fact, Nuer totemism shows some distinctive features which cannot be fully explained in terms of social function. Evans-Pritchard raises some examples: '... many lineages have no totemic affiliations, ... Further, many lineages have the same totem, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 92). As we have seen, what Nuer totems ultimately represent is Spirit, not social groups. That is, their totems have no utility to identify social divisions. The irregular characteristics of Nuer totemism imply that it is entangled with the concept of Spirit.

Evans-Pritchard points out another important aspect of totemism, which Durkheim's sociological orientation missed out. Just as lineages possess their own totems, Nuer individuals can have and respect certain species as their totems, too. Evans-Pritchard differentiates this as 'the totemistic relationship' from the authentic collective form (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1956: 64; 76-7). It is, therefore, apparent that these Nuer totems are not emblems of social groups, but material symbols through which the Nuer as can perceive God. This feature thus proves that totemism does not always take place in the collective form, but at the individual level.

Having made an over-emphasis on functional and collective aspects of social phenomena, Durkheim failed to study some important aspects of totemism: it can appear not only as a social-functional system, but also as a conceptual and personal relationship to the supernatural beings. In the light of Nuer examples, their totemic materials do not identify certain social groups and individuals can have such relationship to certain materials just as social groups have. 'Durkheim and his epigones helped reveal the social function of religions, a conception that Evans-Pritchard has drawn upon liberally' (Diamond 1957: 127).

In this sense, Evans-Pritchard argues against Durkheim's sociological analysis of human institutions. He sarcastically states that 'It was Durkheim and not the savage who made society into a god' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 313). Sensibly enough Evans-Pritchard distinguishes the collective and personal features of totemism in studying

religious phenomena: 'We learn from the collective expression of religion more about the social order than about what is specifically religious thought and practice. Its personal expression tells us more of what religion is in itself' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 320). That is, Evans-Pritchard's anthropological study of totemism is an attempt to re-think social phenomena from the theological point of view.

**-Nuer totemism not as a ritual relationship between man and nature:  
Evans-Pritchard's criticism of Radcliffe-Brown's empirical  
orientation**

The distinction between Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard on totemism may come at the point when the former interprets totemism strictly within the natural scientific frameworks. Radcliffe-Brown's study, as discussed above, interpreted totemism in terms of mechanical analogies between social order and natural order beyond Durkheim's sociological framework. This speculation was considerably informed by his "natural scientific" perspective to study this phenomenon ultimately as a dichotomy of man and nature. Radcliffe-Brown's theories, however, reveal how arbitrary his analysis is when we look at them in the light of the Nuer ethnographic facts.

Evans-Pritchard describes some distinctive characteristics of Nuer totemism: 'Nuer totems are certainly an odd assortment: lion, waterbuck, monitor lizard, crocodile, ... various trees, papyrus, gourd, ..., river and stream, ... rafter, and rope; and, if we were to include totemistic objects, parts of beasts and some diseases' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 80). Evans-Pritchard points out that these objects play less or even no important role in Nuer livelihood (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 80). Here Evans-Pritchard implicitly says that Nuer totemism has no empirical mode or rule as its *raison d'être*. Generally speaking, most of these totemic relationships usually embrace bizarre patterns to occur, for example, when certain animals and materials happen to come into the sight of specific groups or individuals. Evans-Pritchard also reports the local anecdotes telling why totemic relationships between some groups (or individuals) and their totems originated. A clan, for example, has a clear reason why they respect monitor lizard as their clan totem. One day some of their ancestors were on the edge of death from thirst in wandering around woods. Suddenly this animal appeared in front of them and they



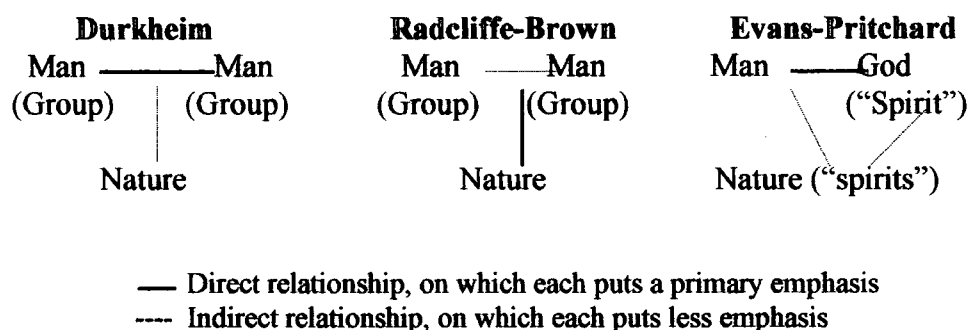
followed it, then they reached a water-place and revived. This is how they saved their lives, and thus came to respect the monitor lizard as their totem (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 66). That is, such a strange first impression or merely a coincidence can determine their totemic or totemistic relationships. Evans-Pritchard raises some probable causes of totemic and totemistic relationships to occur: 'A totemistic, and potentially totemic, relationship may come about with regard to some class of objects through a man or a member of his family suffering any kind of misfortune' (Evans-Pritchard 1956:87). Yet totemic relationships do not necessarily take root. The totemic relationship among the Nuer, although it has some common patterns, is ultimately incidental, not empirical all the time: 'For this to happen it would seem that the event must have extraordinary features. Even then, ..., a totemic relationship does not invariably arise' (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 89). As Evans-Pritchard reports many cases, Nuer totems can consequently be a random association of peculiar species and materials which recall certain lineages or individuals of Spirit. The Nuer ethnographic facts show not how the totemic relationships *must* come about, but how they *may* come about.

As discussed in the previous part, Radcliffe-Brown analysed totemism strictly with natural scientific rigor. Both of his totemic theories (of 1952[1929] and 1958[1951]) attempted to trace the empirical and reasonable relationship between man and totemic species. "The economic utility" upon which totemic relationships are built is one of the good examples of Radcliffe-Brown's attempt to trace the immediate and observable factors to determine totemic relationships. This natural scientific perspective, however, exposes its weakness in the light of Nuer totemism, which shows no empirical mode to take place. The weakness of Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological orientation lay in his over-emphasis on the empirical or natural scientific analogies of human institutions.

Totems, at least among the Nuer, are chosen by chance. That is, there are no rigid norms or laws which constitutes Nuer totemism, unlike the economic utility or the law of binary opposition which Radcliffe-Brown insisted. As a religious system, Nuer totemism demonstrates such irregular and unpredictable features, which could hardly be generalised as organic analogies which are governed by the natural laws and orders.

Consequently the theoretical contrast among Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard on totemism can be summarised in the following page.

### Diagram 3: The relationship between man and totems



These diagrams illustrate the main framework of totemism which each analyst constructed. That is, the viewpoint is the researchers' own, particularly the former two. "The Direct relationship" refers to the one on which they put a primary emphasis: "social" relationship, or ties between groups in Durkheim's paradigm; "ritual" one between man and nature in Radcliffe-Brown's; "spiritual" or religious ones between man and God in Evans-Pritchard's. The secondary relationship refers to the aspects on which each of them puts less emphasis than the direct ones. Durkheim's framework focuses solely on the sociological aspect, thus it does not explain the relationship between man and nature, or totems themselves. Radcliffe-Brown took over this missing point so that he put less emphasis on the relationship between social groups. In contrast to them, Evans-Pritchard introduced the concept of "god" into totemic phenomena. His framework thus shows the triadic relationship within which nature, or totemic symbols represent supernatural being with which man conceptually communicates.

### Analysis: Evans-Pritchard's perspective on totemism

Evans-Pritchard attempts to study the totems among the Nuer primarily in their religious framework. Thus, his work is not guided by a Durkheimian sociological rationale, nor Radcliffe-Brownian empirical perspective. As we have seen, he tries to grasp this phenomenon from a theological viewpoint. As Evans-Pritchard repeats, Nuer totemism can be understood first within the framework of their triadic relationship, as

Diagram 2 shows. Totemic materials are merely the symbols of God, or its representation. In this theological paradigm, the relationship between man and totems is less important than the one between man and God. Evans-Pritchard expresses the humanistic feature of the totemism among the Nuer: '... within their system of religious thought things are not just what they appear to be but as they are convinced of (through) its relation to God' (Evans-Pritchard 1956:142).

## **I. Society as a moral system**

What is significant in Evans-Pritchard's study of Nuer totemism in contrast to the others, especially Radcliffe-Brown? First of all, Evans-Pritchard starts this study by regarding society as a moral system. Unlike Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard sees societies as human affairs as well as being systematic and well-ordered unities like systems in the natural world. In the Nuer ethnographic examples, totemism appears not as a natural analogy, but a humanistic system which attempts to realise a conceptual relationship to God, an almighty, but imaginary being. Nuer totemism is indeed a symbolic representation of *Kwoth* as Evans-Pritchard explains. As a further ethnographic example of how totemic relationships come about at random, he also emphasises the point that unfamiliar and imaginary animals can become totems. Based on Lienhardt of the Dinka, Evans-Pritchard states:

I doubt whether those who respect monorchid bulls or waterbuck often see a member of the class or species, and children in these and other cases must often be told about their totemic attachments before they have seen their totems. There must also be Nuer who respect dom palms who live in parts of Nuerland to the east of the Nile where this tree does not grow. Indeed, I feel confident that one totem, the *lou* serpent, a kind of Loch Ness monster, does not exist, and if this is so, a totem can be purely imaginary.

(Evans-Pritchard 1956: 135)

Evans-Pritchard's study of Nuer totemism at such a humanistic level is much affected by his attitude toward his subject-matter, or society as a moral system. This means that he does not neglect the humanistic aspect of how the indigenous people elaborate such phenomena as their cultural idiom. In other words Evans-Pritchard attempts to understand Nuer totemism from the native point of view, and incorporate the local knowledge into his anthropological analysis. Evans-Pritchard's interpretation of Nuer

totemism is indeed built on his interpersonal communication with the native people. In fact, Peter Riviere, one of Evans-Pritchard's Oxford colleagues, mentioned in my interview with him<sup>3</sup> that Evans-Pritchard's humanistic approach was his determination to understand what terms such as *kwoth* or *mangu*<sup>4</sup> meant to the people who held them.

Evans-Pritchard persuasively demonstrates that social phenomena are full of humanistic and intelligent features stemming from human abilities to imagine, symbolise and conceptualise their lives and world. In another essay, Evans-Pritchard(1963) stresses the importance of the humanistic perspective in carrying out ethnographic work by quoting Greek philosophy and Montesquieu: 'In investigating the nature of social institutions we have moved from the realm of natural law to the realm of positive law, ...'(Evans-Pritchard 1963: 27).

## **II. Social anthropology as one of the humanities**

In the light of the aim of this study (or the theological understanding of Nuer religion), Evans-Pritchard's study of totemism is obviously not a generalisation, but a particularisation. The relevant chapter gives the detailed characteristics of Nuer totemism from the variety of Nuer totemic materials to the modes of totemic relationships that come about. That chapter, however, deals only with Nuer totemism in particular. It is not an attempt to explain totemism in general, nor to discover any regular and fixed traits which could be applicable to similar phenomena elsewhere in the world. Thus, Evans-Pritchard's study does not rigidly employ the natural scientific methods of a Radcliffe-Brown.

Generalisation had, at least in the beginning of this century, been thought of as one of the goals of anthropology. It has been taken for granted that social anthropologists engaged in classifying human social institutions in order to establish "scientific" laws. Both Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown attempted to tabulate totemic phenomena as a general phenomenon that can be seen all over the world and to classify the relevant phenomena into a single category. Contrasted to them, Evans-Pritchard aims merely at

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<sup>3</sup> January, 1999

<sup>4</sup> *Mangu*, or the mystical beliefs and practice among the Azande, is often referred to "witchcraft" in English. See also Chapter 5: The Translation of Culture

describing and intensively studying Nuer totemism. As Evans-Pritchard stated at the Marett lecture, he studies Nuer totemism in order not to seek the general “law”, but the particular “pattern”.

Above all, such perspective and methods of analysis constitute a kind of humanistic orientation in social anthropology. Evans-Pritchard sees societies as systems which do not always allow of prediction as natural phenomena. Societies are also moral systems built by human intelligence, thus they should be understood as they are, or as human affairs. His study of Nuer totemism fully demonstrates the importance of this attitude in carrying out ethnographic works.

How should the difference between Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard be summarised? Their studies on totemism clarify, as this Chapter intends to stress, that the former is a scientific pursuit and the latter is a humanistic one. Starting by treating societies as natural systems, Radcliffe-Brown attempted to study totemic and relevant phenomena as the universal and empirical affinity between society and nature in his early analysis. Later he re-analysed this phenomenon with the mathematical concept of dual oppositions. Evans-Pritchard’s study, on the other hand, aimed at interpreting Nuer totemism in particular. Regarding societies as moral systems, Evans-Pritchard attempted to understand totemism as a religious representation, or the spiritual relationship between man and God.

### **3. After the Marett Lecture: from function to meaning**

The Marett Lecture motivated social anthropology to turn toward humanistic investigation, ending Radcliffe-Brown’s reign as a leading theorist. Kuper (1996) places Evans-Pritchard in an intellectual campaign to challenge the traditional, or natural scientific orientation in and beyond this milieu: ‘Beginning in the 1950s and becoming very general in 1960s, a number of movements across the whole spectrum of the social sciences, and in historiography, had brought into question objectivizing, external, “behaviourist” explanatory schemes, modelled on the natural sciences’ (Kuper 1996:183).

Pocock (1961) sees Evans-Pritchard at a turning point of the anthropological program “from function to meaning” in the modern British school. That is, Evans-Pritchard is one of the pioneers of such a new insight among his contemporaries. Pocock(1971[1961]) further states that his humanistic insight had already appeared in his earlier study among the Azande, or *Witchcraft, magic and oracles among the Azande* of 1937 (Pocock 1971[1961]:72). Evans-Pritchard’s Nuer totemism, as discussed above, eloquently represents such a new scope of this subject in exploring cultural values and meanings in particular rather than sociological laws in general. Riviere, who regards Evans-Pritchard’s Marett Lecture as “a vital idea in the last half century of British social anthropology”, clarified the difference between his earlier study among the Azande (1937b) and *Nuer Religion*: in Azande witchcraft, Evans-Pritchard tries to scientifically explain that witches did not exist, while he did not attempt to prove the existence of *kwoth* in Nuer Religion<sup>5</sup>.

Actually younger generations came to appeal to a less natural scientific style in their ethnographic studies. They gradually moved to ‘more phenomenological, interpretive and humanist approaches’ (Kuper 1996: 183). Some studies of tribal religion and symbolism in the following generations are obviously influenced by Evans-Pritchard’s humanistic approach. Lienhardt (1961), one of Evans-Pritchard’s former pupils and colleagues, presented a religious study of the Dinka, one of the neighbouring tribes of the Nuer. This book, which was dedicated to his teacher, vividly shows that the author’s theological interest and pursuit were inspired by Evans-Pritchard.

## 4. Conclusion

This chapter has reiterated terms like “humanistic” or “one of the humanities” to distinguish Evans-Pritchard’s perspective and methods of analysis from Radcliffe-Brown’s. Now we understood Evans-Pritchard’s idea “in theory” that social anthropology is one of humanities which studies societies not as natural, but moral

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<sup>5</sup> Riviere identified this as one of the principal contributions of Evans-Pritchard during the interview with him.

systems, not in general, but in particular. As his humanistic orientation in practice, we have seen the totemism among the Nuer as the unique representation of their humanity.

Hatch (1973) states that the differences between Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard are 'fundamental': 'Radcliffe-Brown insisted that society is a natural system and that it is to be studied scientifically, whereas to Evans-Pritchard it is a moral system, and anthropological analysis consists in the subjective interpretation of institutions' (Hatch 1973: 215). After Malinowski's seminar, Evans-Pritchard turned to Radcliffe-Brown. Evans-Pritchard learned about anthropology's systematic and natural scientific orientation, on which he made some prominent works. Then Evans-Pritchard gradually transformed his own viewpoint in this subject. It can be interpreted that Evans-Pritchard's humanistic orientation is "subjective" as Hatch (1973) states, in terms of his antithesis to Radcliffe-Brown's ambition to establish this subject as a natural, or "objective" science of society.

In fact even after his Marett Lecture, Evans-Pritchard paid respect to Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological achievement. In the publication of Radcliffe-Brown's essays, Evans-Pritchard (1952) wrote the Preface in which he appraised this systematic thinker who demonstrated anthropological analysis 'by a consistency and clear direction which is rare in modern anthropology' (Evans-Pritchard 1952 :v). This statement proves that Evans-Pritchard was under Radcliffe-Brown's influence in terms especially of its analytical rigor. That is, Evans-Pritchard's humanistic program was fundamentally at the theoretical level in seeing his subject-matter, or societies as moral systems to be particularised in ethnographic inquiries.

Whether social anthropology is a science or humanity was indeed one of the critical issues for Evans-Pritchard in his profession. Kuper (1996) says that Evans-Pritchard seemed to have affiliated with Radcliffe-Brown until his inaugural lecture in 1948 (Kuper 1996: 124). However Evans-Pritchard delivered a lecture in 1946 (Evans-Pritchard 1946), which implicitly demonstrates his ambivalence as to whether this field should be treated "a natural science" or "moral philosophy" (Evans-Pritchard 1946:414).

The Marett lecture consequently left some implicit agendas for his contemporary and the succeeding generations to think about the epistemology of social anthropology as "a

science” or “one of the humanities” as an academic pursuit: What is this subject? Which direction is social anthropology taking, or ought it to take?’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]:3). These issues seem still critical in contemporary anthropology. Carrithers (1993) clarifies this issue by differentiating “anthropology” and “ethnography”(Carrithers 1993: 151). In the end of the Marett Lecture, Evans-Pritchard gave his own answer to this critical question by stating his own expectation regarding future social anthropologists: ‘... there will be a turning towards humanistic disciplines, especially towards history, and particularly toward social history or the history of institutions, of cultures and of ideas (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]:28). “History”, “cultures” and “ideas” seem to further clarify Evans-Pritchard’s humanism in social anthropology, which is further discussed in the following chapters.



## **Chapter 4**

### ***Anthropology and History***

Chapter 2 traced Evans-Pritchard's early period, particularly under the influence of Malinowski. Chapter 3 dealt primarily with his humanistic standpoint presented at the Marett Lecture and his repudiation of Radcliffe-Brown. This chapter examines his Marett Lecture from a different angle: The idea of social anthropology as one of the humanities represented Evans-Pritchard's attitude toward this subject especially in his later anthropological career as we have seen in Chapter 3. He also stated, in the Marett Lecture, that social anthropology was a kind of historiography. This chapter focuses more on this idea about the mutual relationship between anthropology and history.

#### **1. The ahistoricism of British social anthropology**

Sociologists and historians may appear indifferent to each other in their studies. 'The question must arise of how writing about others, about society and culture, became ahistorical in the first place'(Thomas 1989:18). Generally speaking, sociology studies societies chiefly in the present, while history carries out a retrospective research primarily for past events. The concerns with their own subject-matter seemingly keep them away from each other. As an expert in "human science", which discipline do anthropologists affiliate with?

The question about "the identity" of social anthropology is the starting point of this chapter. In fact, the history of anthropology shows this dilemma. Evans-Pritchard starts his lecture on this critical issue briefly with the current climate of his overseas colleagues, which are more or less "ahistorical" (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 46). His idea to incorporate a historical approach in anthropology was motivated by the neglect of "history" and "historical quest" in this subject, particularly in the modern British school.

Some people might say that works among earlier anthropologists were a kind of historical inquiry<sup>6</sup>. Evans-Pritchard (1962[1961]) comments on, for example, social evolutionists as ‘The precursors and founders of our science had attempted, mistaking irreversibility for inevitability, to formulate laws of historical development by which all human societies pass through a determined succession of stages’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 46-7). That is, they used a kind of historical inquiry for constructing the model of “social evolution”. Diffusionists, who emerged as an antithesis to evolutionists, attempted to explain social diversity from a viewpoint of “culture-contact”. Although they aimed at arguing against evolutionists, they took a similar approach: they assumed some cultural “origins” from which its significance spread to the neighbouring areas, and thus they appealed to the same historical comparison of cultures that evolutionists did (see also the section entitled: 1. British anthropology before Evans-Pritchard in Chapter 2).

These theoretical orientations are frequently seen as diachronic speculation, or an elucidation of changing or diversifying aspects of societies: social evolutionists attempted to study its “changing process” and diffusionists “cultural variety”. In a sense, their theoretical formulations could be seen as comparable to the orthodox historians in writing about the past over a period of time. Both of them were, however, built on hypothetical speculation without empirical rigor. Evans-Pritchard points at, for example, the abuse of historical methods by diffusionists: ‘As the diffusionists claimed that they used historical methods of research their inattention to rules of evidence caused a further revulsion from history’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961] :47).

The lack of empirical research among Victorian anthropologists was a plausible point on which they were later criticised. Modern functional anthropologists argued that these earlier speculations were “pseudo-historical”, for they relied primarily upon the indirect data collected by non-professionals. Thus, their speculations could not be called “historical inquiries”, which should be based upon archival research from a modern

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<sup>6</sup> Ardener (1985), for example, discussed “Modernism” which is exemplified by the three grand theories in social anthropology, namely functionalism, structural-functionalism, structuralism. He regards earlier paradigms (e.g Social Evolutionism and Diffusionism) as “historicism” in his main debate of modernism as a Western cultural movement.

point of view. In other words, the functionalists' criticism of both evolutionists and diffusionists is, in Evans-Pritchard's term, 'writing bad history' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 47).

What functionalists chiefly advocated was a synchronic approach, or a way of seeing things at a particular moment of time. Their theoretical orientation thus concentrated more on the current state of societies primarily at the present day, which could be empirically assessed through participant observation. This was a kind of "ahistorical" inquiry in terms of their rejection of the proceeding diachronic speculations.

However functionalists were not always blind to "history" and "historical study" in anthropology. Firth (1951) maintains that the exclusion of historical study in Modern British social anthropology is true only in terms of their rejection of hypothetical reconstruction: '... modern British social anthropologists have real respect and considerable interest, which is the greater the more the historical study deals with a sociological problem'(Firth 1951: 485). Radcliffe-Brown's rejection of the historical approach, for example, originated in the abuse of the historical approach in the absence of empirical fieldwork among his precursors: 'My objection to conjectural history is not that it is historical, but that it is conjectural' (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 50). Radcliffe-Brown, in fact, clearly defined ethnology as a historical study within the entire anthropological program (Radcliffe-Brown 1958: 40). Malinowski, although his ahistorical tendency was not so explicit as Radcliffe-Brown's, showed some interests in so-called "historical documents" themselves: he tried to differentiate the various documentary forms of the past such as history, myth, legend, anecdotes, folklore (Malinowski 1926: Evans-Pritchard 1963: 8) as an attempt at a kind of historical study using those documents (e.g. Malinowski 1935). Kuper (1996) states that Malinowski's indifference to tribal history and its historical inquiry was explicit only when he argued against his precursors (Kuper: 1996:29). In fact, Malinowski was, in his later days (during the late 1920s and the early 1930s) interested in "culture change", or the social dynamics of the indigenous life after colonisation (Kuper 1996:29).

This is a brief picture of "historical studies" in anthropology until the modern functionalists' program. Regardless of their intention, the functionalists' analysis was

above all ahistorical. The “ahistoricism” that Evans-Pritchard criticised was mainly that of functionalists, which was current when he started his anthropological training.

## **2. Evans-Pritchard’s idea of ‘Anthropology and History’**

### **(1) The Marett Lecture**

Evans-Pritchard’s Marett Lecture of 1950 is a valuable source in discussing historical studies in social anthropology. As discussed in Chapter 3, the focal point of that lecture was whether this subject was a science or one of the humanities. Needless to say, Evans-Pritchard advocated the latter, and also stressed that this argument was ‘perhaps at its sharpest when the relations of anthropology and history are being discussed, ...’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962 [1950]:13).

The extended argument at that lecture further clarifies the distinction between the scientific pursuit and the humanistic pursuit in social anthropology from a different angle. Chapter 3 discussed it mainly from the anthropologists’ viewpoint of their subject-matter, or societies as natural systems to be generalised or as moral ones to be particularised. This issue, in fact, taps into another agenda in this subject: is a scientific orientation likely to be ahistorical, and a humanistic orientation historical? Indeed the Marett Lecture raised a dual theme to think about the nature of social anthropology; first it is a science or a humanity, secondly should it be ahistorical or historical.

First of all Evans-Pritchard stresses that the difference between social anthropology and history lies not in their “method and aim”, but in their “technique, emphasis and perspective” (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 25). ‘By the force of his example, and by his statement on anthropology and history, Evans-Pritchard has removed many barriers which seemed once to separate them’ (Smith 1962: 79). Both subjects aim essentially at studying the same subject-matter, that is, “peoples”. Social anthropology has attempted, at least since the establishment of empirical method, to search for “peoples” primarily in the present, while history studies them chiefly in the past. This difference is, however, merely in their emphasis of their studies of “peoples” either in the present or in the past.

Evans-Pritchard insists that anthropological inquiry is indeed similar to the historical one. Quoting Kroeber's essay (1952[1935]), he stresses that anthropologists primarily aim at "descriptive integration", which is 'the fundamental characteristic of the historical method' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961][1950]: 24).

What social anthropologists have in fact chiefly been doing is to write cross-sections of history, integrative descriptive accounts of primitive peoples at a moment of time which are in other respects like the accounts written by historians about peoples over a period of time, ...'

(Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 24)

Evans-Pritchard cites some "anthropological" works by historians when they focus 'exclusively on a particular culture at a particular and limited period of history' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 24). Anthropological writings can also be history books, especially when anthropologists write about 'a society developing in time' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 24). Drawn from this "descriptive" feature which these disciplines commonly have, he claims that '...social anthropology is a kind of historiography, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950] 26).

Evans-Pritchard believes that descriptive integration is the fundamental similarity between anthropology and history, and thus this similarity lays the ground for their collaboration. Their mutual relationship is, in fact, fruitful to each other as he insists: 'Historians can supply social anthropologists with invaluable material, sifted and vouched for by critical techniques of testing and interpretation. Social anthropologists can provide the historian of the future with some of his best records, based on careful observations, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]:25). Both fields, as Evans-Pritchard stresses, can be reciprocal for its own and the other's theoretical and methodological development.

The Marett Lecture is fundamentally based on Evans-Pritchard's humanistic principle: social anthropology as one of the humanities should seek for descriptive integration of societies. This principle, needless to say, appears against the natural scientific and law-seeking programs in social anthropology, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Thus his lecture concluded with Evans-Pritchard's expectation for historical study to be more

accepted in this field: '... in the future there will be a turning towards humanistic disciplines, especially towards history, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950] 28).

## **(2) 'Anthropology and History': the revision in 1961**

Evans-Pritchard later reviewed this issue, or the mutual relationship between anthropology and history. *Anthropology and History* (1962[1961]) is a kind of expanded version of this issue, reviewing the criticism of his Marett Lecture.

What seems most distinctive in this 1961 essay is that Evans-Pritchard focuses more on the subject-matter itself, "society", rather than the descriptive orientation both in anthropology and history. By regarding these disciplines both as 'branches of social science' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 62), not those of the humanities, he seemingly succeeds in elaborating this issue at the methodological level. The Marett lecture merely expected social anthropology to be more historically oriented, but this revision further explores their fundamental differences and methodological difficulties particularly with regard to how these problems could be solved by their synthesis.

In this revision, Evans-Pritchard is also careful of "history" itself as it is dealt with by orthodox historians. The "history" which concerns this anthropologist is not a political, but 'a sociological history', which focuses on 'social institutions, in mass movements and great cultural changes, and ... regularities, tendencies, types, and typical sequence; and always within a restricted historical and cultural context' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 48). He also cites some historians who aim at studying 'sociological history' such as Maitland, Vinogradoff and Bloch (see also Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 48). Thus, sociological history equates to what social anthropology essentially studies, in Evans-Pritchard's understanding.

Sociological history is the most critical point in Evans-Pritchard's anthropological program. Traditionally anthropologists (at least in Britain) have studied (primitive) societies, chiefly at the "mundane" or everyday level. Historians have, on the other hand, dealt with societies, primarily political history. Their different emphases on the conventional or political context of societies have kept them away from each other, although both commonly study "society". This division of intellectual labour, therefore, created some problems which each subject could hardly solve on its own. In this sense

their collaboration would be found productive, helping both disciplines to solve their own problems. Drawn from the essential analogies between them, “sociological history” is indeed a meeting point of their synthesis.

Therefore sociological history would be a potential field in which future historians could start their retrospective work. Nevertheless this milieu of history can hardly be accessed because of the lack of historical materials. How can historians launch this new field without the material? Evans-Pritchard is rather confident of the anthropological training: ‘I hope, ..., to see the day when a course of social anthropology, including some field research, ... , will be regarded as a valuable part in an historian’s training’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]:58). That is, the empirical tradition in anthropology would be a great help for historians to study sociological fields of history. Anthropological inquiries (e.g. participant observation) have never occupied historians’ inquiries. The empirical methods of anthropology offer historians a guideline to access undocumented “history”, or sociological history.

Concentrated more on “society” or the subject-matter itself, Evans-Pritchard’s revision in 1961 ranges beyond the milieu of anthropology. This essay actually inspired historians (e.g. Thomas 1961; 1963 and see also the section entitled: 5. After Evans-Pritchard’s historical anthropology). His idea about the mutual relationship between anthropology and history is based ultimately on his humanistic perspective announced in the Marett Lecture. That is, what he hopes to claim, in this succession of arguments, is that social anthropology is a descriptive and particularising study of human societies. Historiography was indeed the best way for this former historian to maximise his ethnographic works.

### **3. Social anthropology: diachronic or synchronic?**

Based on Evans-Pritchard’s theoretical texts, we have discussed the reciprocal relationship between anthropology and history. As he stresses, these subjects overlap each other in many aspects, inviting their collaboration in the future. Beyond his first idea on social anthropology as a historiography, or a descriptive enterprise as one of the

humanities, the revision elaborated this issue from the viewpoint of social sciences. Now we can question the reasons behind Evans-Pritchard's argument.

The focal point of his argument is one of the most critical issues in British anthropology since its dawn, as raised in the beginning of this chapter: in carrying out ethnographic research, should the anthropologist be a sociologist or a historian? As we have seen, earlier anthropology used to take a diachronic approach, while modern anthropology appealed to a synchronic approach as the antithesis of the hypothetical reconstructions practiced by their precursors. That is, British anthropology had shifted from diachronic orientation to synchronic orientation following a theoretical and methodological development. The ahistoricism of the modern British school was established on the functionalists' dismissal of historical inquiry of society.

Evans-Pritchard recalls for an immediate review of such an "ahistorical" tendency among functionalists, which was more or less based on their natural scientific ambition. The laws of the natural sciences are held to be valid throughout time: the so-called principle of "uniformitarianism" proposed by Lyell. About Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, or the pioneers of functional orientation based on this principle, Kuper (1996) states that 'Both saw themselves as prophets of a new science, a promising branch of the established natural sciences' (Kuper 1996:35). At this point they had implicitly agreed with each other on their anthropological goal to establish the functional laws of society, a goal which was commensurable with those of the natural sciences.

This "scientific" goal drove functional anthropologists to regard their subject-matter, or societies as natural, and thus more or less static affairs. It is notorious that Radcliffe-Brown searched solely for the natural scientific and mechanical analogies of social institutions (see also Chapter 3). Their anthropological goal spurred their "scientific" perspective to study social institutions as relatively changeless systems like natural organisms. This is how functionalists advocated a synchronic approach by which they assumed the natural scientific theories of societies.

Although each of them developed distinctive functional theories on their own, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown commonly neglected historical study in their analysis. Radcliffe-Brown (1940), for example, in the preface of *African Political Systems*,



tactically emphasised the sustainability of social structure which was by and large similar to the natural equilibrium:

Social structure is not to be thought of as static, but as condition of equilibrium that only persists by being continually renewed, like that chemical-physical homostasis of a living organism. Events occur which disturb the equilibrium in some way, and a social reaction follows which tends to restore it. Sometimes a system may persist relatively unchanged for some length of time; ...

(Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xxii)

Further he advocated a synchronic approach itself as a basis of “scientific” study of society: ‘... the study of synchronic problems must necessarily to some extent precede the study of diachronic problems’ (Radcliffe-Brown 1957: 77). In other words, he had believed in the primacy of synchronic analysis, on which the functional laws of social structure were invariably built. Smith (1962) labels Radcliffe-Brown’s synchronic orientation as ‘*the fallacy of the ethnographic present*’ (Smith: 1962: 77). About structural-functionalism, Smith explains that ‘Perhaps the two most important features of this theory as developed by Radcliffe-Brown are its radical rejection of history and incapacity to accommodate change’ (Smith 1962: 76). In an another essay, Radcliffe-Brown (1952[1941]) turned down flatly the study of causal relations, or a variety of historical explanations as “an applied science” in contrast to structural or sociological analysis as “a pure theoretical science” (Radcliffe-Brown 1952[1941]:60).

Malinowski, although his ahistorical tendency was at a theoretical level, neglected a historical study in his functional analysis. Layton (1989) sees the ahistorical approach of Malinowski’s Functionalism as a kind of arbitrary manipulation to ensure his theoretical framework: ‘For Malinowski myth existed almost entirely to validate contemporary behaviour’ (Layton 1989: 1).

There is also a technical reason for modern anthropologists to abandon historical inquiry: fieldwork. Evans-Pritchard (1962[1961]) states that ‘... the reason, or certainly one of the reasons, why British social anthropologists have not conducted historical research has been precisely this emphasis on field research, or perhaps we should rather say an over-emphasis on field research for its own sake and a too exclusive interest in primitive peoples simply because they are primitive’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 57). Empirical research, especially of “primitive societies” also caused the ahistoricism of

the modern British school. "Primitive peoples" were often non-literate, and thus they had no written art to record their history. Historical documents by travellers and colonial officers tell the local history only for the last few centuries since they came there. The technique of fieldwork, however, enables anthropologists to access the real life of these peoples without relying on their "history". Historical inquiry into "primitive societies" was thus marginalised merely because they had no "written" tradition, and also because anthropologists could empirically study them through participant observation. Evans-Pritchard, in another essay, comments on this point in contrast to American cultural anthropology, which is more likely to be historical inquiry, partly because it does not have a solid tradition of fieldwork (Evans-Pritchard 1964:17).

Non-literate societies at least in British social anthropology had been synonymous with "societies without history, and thus historical changes", Radcliffe-Brown (1952) once clearly justified his ahistorical study of primitive peoples lacking reliable documents ; 'In the primitive societies that are studied by social anthropology there are no historical records'(Radcliffe-Brown 1952:3). Because of modern methodological rigor and of the absence of written documents, non-literate societies had become a monopoly of anthropology, while literate societies had been abandoned in anthropological program.

With these reasons functionalists consequently paid less attention to "history" as one of the reliable ethnographic sources to investigate. Evans-Pritchard challenges such "arbitrary" boundaries in the ahistorical analyses of functionalists. In fact his 1961 essay starts with his critical statement of the functional tradition in Britain: 'The influence in this country of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, both extremely hostile to history, was still dominant; ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]:48). His criticism is more implicit against Radcliffe-Brown, who established the synchronic tradition in the structural analysis (see also the following section entitled: 4. Case study: Evans-Pritchard's historical anthropology: *Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, (2) *Sanusi* ... as an anthropological text'). About the result of such ahistorical analysis among functional anthropologists, Evans-Pritchard sarcastically states that 'An historical fact ... shorn its unique features escapes ... temporality. It is no longer a passing incident, a sort of

accident, but is, as it were, taken out of the flux of time and achieves conceptual stability as a sociological proposition' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]:49).

Evans-Pritchard's criticism of the functionalists' ahistoricism consequently evokes two points missing in anthropology at that time. Firstly it remarks that primitive societies have "history" as Western societies do. Functionalists aimed at explaining solely "the present" and the "static" aspect of social institutions. Their subject-matter, or primitive societies, were thus seen as "societies without history" simply because of the lack of written material about their history. Indeed primitive societies appeared to provide plausible material on which functionalists could formulate their synchronic laws. The absence of literary art and of historical data, however, does not mean that there is no history. Kroeber, who inspired Evans-Pritchard, missed out this point (see Kroeber 1952[1935]:65). Evans-Pritchard's argument claims that primitive societies are indeed "historical" and dynamic. A similar argument appears in E. Wolf (1982).

This idea thus legitimises historical research in social anthropology, which was strictly a sociological orientation at that time. This is the second point. The historical approach is actually more effective than the synchronic approach for testing the static property of social institutions: if one attempts to insist on the functional stability of society, it should be proved over a period of time. Functionalists ignored this point in verifying their theoretical framework. Evans-Pritchard (1962[1950]) claims that '... neglect of the history of institutions prevents the functionalist anthropologist not only from studying diachronic problems but also from testing the very functional constructions to which he attaches most importance, ...'(Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 21).

What Evans-Pritchard's argument represents, as reiterated in this chapter, is a critical question whether social anthropology should have a synchronic orientation like orthodox sociologists, or a diachronic one like authentic historians. Quoting Maitland, a historian, Evans-Pritchard gives his own answer: '...*history* must choose being social anthropology or being nothing ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 64). This statement implicitly represents his idea that social anthropologists should learn equally from the productive approaches of both sociology and history.

#### **4. Case study: Evans-Pritchard's historical anthropology *Sanusi of Cyrenaica***

The integration of historical approach and sociological analysis is probably one of unique ideas which Evans-Pritchard presented to British anthropology at that time. We have seen, so far, some of his theoretical texts on this issue. This idea, in fact, has already been demonstrated before his Marett lecture. *Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (1949) is one of the few history books written by anthropologists as Evans-Pritchard himself notes (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 24; 1961: 13).

This book is a dual attempt at historical and sociological inquiries of the Sanusiya Order, one of the Islamic Orders in Cyrenaica, northern Libya. In terms of the current ahistorical orientation of British social anthropology, Peters (1950) states that this work is 'the first attempt by a modern social anthropologist to use historical material' (Peters 1950: 50). In the preface Evans-Pritchard clearly states that he aims at writing a history of the development of the Sanusiya Order among the Bedouin tribes of the country, and of the political development of the Order which sprang from the association of the Sanusiya family and the Bedouin (Evans-Pritchard 1949: iii-iv).

##### **(1) *Sanusi* ... as a history text**

This book deals with the period from 1837, when the Sanusiya family settled in Cyrenaica as their lodge, to 1942, when this land was liberated from the Italian force. Evans-Pritchard's field research started in 1942 and he had also a reliable source of historical data<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, his research is retrospective, as the orthodox historian looks at the past.

Characteristically Evans-Pritchard carries out some typical anthropological inquiries in this historical study. Over two chapters, he describes the cultural background which was traceable at the present day through his intensive fieldwork: Chapter 2, for example, describes the geographic background (Part I), the mode of livelihood and distribution of land and population partly determined by the natural environment (II, &

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<sup>7</sup> Evans-Pritchard's references for this study are mainly from Italy. See also Appendix II: A Selected Bibliography in Evans-Pritchard, 1949, *Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, pp. 232-3.

III), the political context, which was patterned by the tribal system (IV), the genealogy (V) and so on. The following chapter presented a typical anthropological study of social relationships, or a structural analysis mainly between the Sanusiya family and Cyrenaican Bedouin.

Why are these series of anthropological inquiries important in writing a history? Firstly the anthropological emphasis on sociological or conventional history guides a historical study in the absence of orthodox political “history”. In the history of the Sanusiya Order, there was no political institutions which could be called “state” or “government” in the Western definition. Cyrenaica had been occupied by the Turkish (Ottoman Empire) since the sixteenth century, however this administration had played a minor role in the local political context.

The Sanusiya Order was seemingly a religious unity, but also a political representation. The majority population in Cyrenaica was semi-nomadic Bedouin who moved around the land by season and had no settled residence. Before the Grand Sanusi, the founder of the Sanusiya Order, officially registered this land as a religious centre in 1837, the Cyrenaican Bedouin had already been Muslim, but they did not have a formal organisation of their religious customs. The Sanusiya family was, in a sense, a kind of an Islamic missionary providing formal disciplines and practices. The Sanusiya family, however, did not predominantly dictate the religious morality among the Bedouins. The Bedouin tribal system played a substantial political role in controlling the tribal morality and social order in stateless Cyrenaica (see also in the following part, ‘*Sanusi...* as an anthropological text’). The Sanusiya family merely offered the formal Islamic lessons and the ceremonial occasions to ensure the tribal morality, not an overarching political administration. The Sanusiya Order, in fact, owed more to the indigenous autonomy among the Bedouin. As Evans-Pritchard says in the preface, the relationship between the Sanusiya family and the Cyrenaican Bedouin played the most important role in the development of this Order. The Sanusiya Order was an outcome of “the indirect rule of the religious value” based on “the indigenous tribal rule”.

Clearly such anthropological inquiries complement the following historical quest. Indeed the Sanusiya Order was based on an anarchical, but harmonious association of Islamic discipline and the local autonomy. Without a structural analysis (or a study of

social relationship), the Sanusiya Order would never have been understood. The orthodox historians, who were accustomed to dealing with orthodox political history would be at a loss when faced with such non-political histories.

Anthropological inquiries also helped this historical study without relying too much upon written documents. Evans-Pritchard inspected reliable historical documents, but these merely played the role of evidence supplementing his anthropological exploration. This study is complemented by his own field research as given above. Evans-Pritchard carefully traces back the development of the Sanusiya Order from the existing cultural background and social structure. Indeed he makes most of the present and observable facts in reconstructing the history of the Sanusiya Order, which had already declined. This study proved that the anthropological training enabled anthropologists to write a social history without depending too much on "written history".

## **(2) *Sanusi* ... as an anthropological text**

Obviously anthropological inquiries were of great help in understanding the history of Sanusiya Order. But how did the historian's perspective help this anthropological study of the Order?

*The Sanusi* explicitly shows Evans-Pritchard's anthropological concern as well as the historical account of the Order. Kuper (1996) states that '... Evans-Pritchard's historical study of the Sanusi, ... produced a structural analysis strongly reminiscent of that which emerged from his strikingly non-historical study of the Nuer' (Kuper 1996: 126). Indeed this history book vividly illustrates the Cyrenaican social structure.

The segmentary system<sup>8</sup> is one of the topics on which Evans-Pritchard brought a theoretical development to social anthropology. As Kuper remarks above, this book demonstrates the various folk models in Cyrenaican political history. This Bedouin

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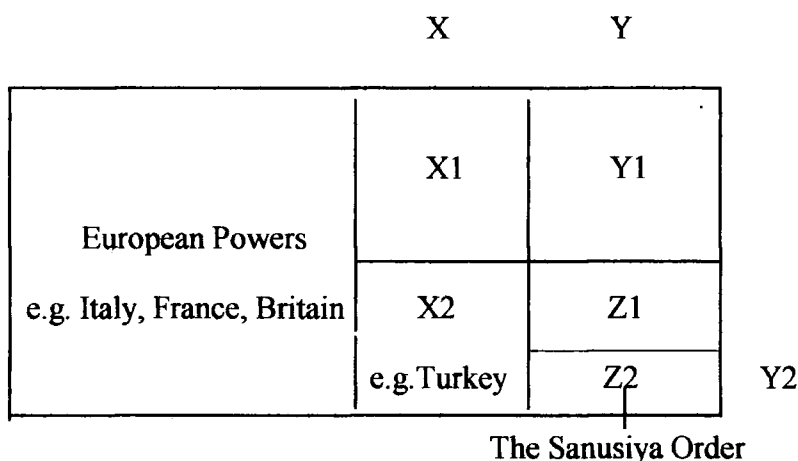
<sup>8</sup> The segmentary (lineage) system: a system of political alliance and confrontation in intertribal conflict. This system is often seen among non-centralised societies especially in Africa such as the Nuer and the Tiv, which were initially reported on by Evans-Pritchard and M. Fortes. Each segment opposes and allies according to their genealogical relationship, particularly unilineal descent principle, or how close or far their political enemy is to their own in conflict. Evans-Pritchard identified this system with a process of "fission and fusion", whose function was 'to maintain the structural equilibrium' (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 159). See also Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940.

system can be by and large accommodated to Evans-Pritchard's formal segmentary model among the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940) as given in the following page:

## The segmentary models in Cyrenaica

A ( Christian culture)

B ( Muslim culture)



(Original: Evans-Pritchard: 1940a:144)

Z2 (the Sanusiya Order) and Z1 (the other Islamic orders) fundamentally oppose each other. Suppose that the Sanusiya unit would confront unit Y1, these units (Z1 and Z2) could be integrated into the unit Y2 as the same segmentary unit in order to oppose Y1. These units (Y1 &Y2) can unite as a larger unit (Y) in order to fight X. In this diagram, the Turkish force could be seen as a political enemy<sup>9</sup> in the confrontation of X and Y, however, it becomes the same political alliance (B) to oppose the Christian unit A such as the Italian force. About this folk model in Cyrenaica, Evans-Pritchard states that ‘The structure of Bedouin society is such that whatever the size of the group a man considers himself to belong to in any situation, he is in virtue of his loyalty to it opposed to other groups of like order in the tribal structure’ (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 103).

<sup>9</sup> In fact, the Turkish administration, although it played a minor role in the Sanusiya Order, had a relatively favourable relationship with the Sanusiya family, who appreciated the social conformity as their religious discipline. Turks’ social sentiment to the Sanusiya family shows that the segmentary principle was more or less current: ‘They (or the Turks) did not believe that the Sanusiya loved them, but they knew that if it came to a decision the Order and the Bedouin would support them against any of the Christian Powers of Europe’ (Evans-Pritchard 1949: 92).

*The Sanusi* is, however, not merely a typical synchronic analysis of social structure. Peters (1950) states that it is 'an attempt to explain contemporary problems, and history is appealed to as a means whereby the problem can be illuminated (Peters 1950: 50) "Social structure" had been in the main stream of the modern British school after Malinowski's reign. The founder, Radcliffe-Brown, had stressed the static property of social structure, which was maintained by the function of each social institution. That is, "timelessness" was a proposition of Radcliffe-Brown's Structural-functionalism. Evans-Pritchard has seemingly been sceptical of such ahistorical orientation, although he presented a rigid and mechanical model among the Nuer. He seems to have hoped to emphasise the structural continuity of social function over a period of time. In this sense, *The Sanusi* reveals an important point to which Radcliffe-Brown was blind. That is, Evans-Pritchard attempts to back up the continuous nature of social structure with the concept of "time". The inability to explain "structural continuity" was indeed a weakness of Radcliffe-Brown's Structural-functional paradigm. Later Evans-Pritchard's segmentary theory, which was based on a Radcliffe-Brownian framework, was to invite numerous criticisms<sup>10</sup>. Peters (1967), although pointing out the methodological insight of *The Sanusi* as given above, demonstrates the inflexibility of the segmentary principle based on his own fieldwork in Cyrenaica.

Evans-Pritchard is also careful in carrying out a structural analysis in historical context. Indeed he studies the Sanusiya Order based on the segmentary theory. This theoretical framework, however, does not always guide his ethnographic study. He appreciates historical facts rather than sociological models. He cites several "exceptions" of this models in the light of the empirical facts. The Turks, for example, waged war with Russia in 1876 and requested the Sanusi family to join their troops. The

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<sup>10</sup> The development of the segmentary theory: The inflexibility of Evans-Pritchard's segmentary model invited the following criticism particularly since the 1960's. Evans-Pritchard referred solely to the segmentary system, which was based on the patrilineal descent system among the Nuer. The major criticism was whether the segmentary principle really governed the tribal identity and behaviour. 'Uncritical application of lineage theory can obscure the complex reality of political organisation and process in segmentary societies' (Saltzman 1978:53). Various ethnographic studies especially in other parts of Africa and the Middle East contributed to its theoretical development. See also Middleton and Tait 1958; Sahlin 1961; Peters 1967; Saltzman 1978; Kuper 1982; Verdon 1982 etc.



Sanusi unit was to assist the Turks according to their segmentary principle *in theory*, but they did not *in practice*. There are further exceptions to this principle in the history (see also Evans-Pritchard 1949:23). These historical facts imply that anthropological theories do not always explain empirical facts. It is more important, at least for Evans-Pritchard, to elucidate not what something *is/was supposed to be*, but what it *is/was actually like*. The historical inquiry into social structure is more likely to be “conjectural” or “pseudo-historical”, as Radcliffe-Brown warned. *The Sanusi*, however, successfully incorporates historical facts into the retrospective analysis of the Sanusiya social structure. It is, in fact, impossible to accommodate Sanusiya history within the rigid segmentary model which Evans-Pritchard demonstrated in *The Nuer*.

*The Sanusi* is, thus, an implicit criticism of modern ahistorical orientation, namely Malinowski's Functionalism and Radcliffe-Brown's Structural-functionalism. Both of these grand theories neglected the time-reckoning study of society. However the historical inquiry is not incompatible with the study of social stability as Evans-Pritchard proved in this study. With a solely anthropological perspective, description of the segmentary system among the Cyrenaican Bedouin would have fallen into the orthodox synchronic account. Evans-Pritchard, however, carefully traced the structural continuity in Cyrenaican social history. In another essay (1981), Evans-Pritchard bitterly criticises the ahistoricism of Radcliffe-Brown, which virtually discarded all the possibilities to empirically reconstruct social structure in the past: ‘He eschewed guesswork history (one must add, all history)’ (Evans-Pritchard 1981: 196).

### **(3) The evaluation of Evans-Pritchard's *Sanusi* ...**

The twofold value of this book prevents us from evaluating it either as an anthropological work or a history book. It could be seen as a historical quest of the Sanusiya Order. This is also an anthropological work to study social structure in Cyrenaica. Each statement seems possible. In fact, the evaluation of this study varies from one anthropologist to another. Kuper (1996) sees this work as a typical structural analysis (Kuper 1996: 126), while Thomas (1989) states that ‘Some studies simply draw evidence from a historical period into a synchronic analysis of a cultural or social

system. What is abstracted from time is thus a set of archival sources, rather than fieldwork observations (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1949 ; ...)' (Thomas 1989: 6).

Regardless of whether it is labelled as a historian's work or an anthropologist's, it is obvious that such interdisciplinary work was then challenging, and is also considerably difficult to carry out in general. Firth states that this study is one of the few historical studies by anthropologists, which were then rarely attempted because of the lack of time and the specific training (Firth 1951: 485). It is, thus, possible to evaluate *The Sanusi* as Evans-Pritchard's double industry to comprehend the Sanusiya Order from both sociological and historical viewpoints. Indeed this volume would not have been achieved without his knowledge and perspective from both disciplines. These disciplines are indeed not contradictory, but complementary for the deeper understanding of social structure over a period of time. *The Sanusi* persuasively shows that "the past" and "the present" are equally important in ethnographic research.

## **5. After Evans-Pritchard's historical anthropology**

Clearly Evans-Pritchard's idea of historical inquiry in social anthropology stemmed from the ahistorical orientation among functionalists. Ironically his suggestion to integrate historical inquiry with anthropological programs was not elaborated any more in his own work. Kuper (1996) examines Evans-Pritchard's works after the Marett lecture: 'His final monograph, *The Azande: History and Political Institutions* (1971) was almost perversely ethnohistorical and diffusionist, ... but innocent of any sociological analysis' (Kuper 1996: 126). Kuper further adds that his later works (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1965; 1981) 'expressed a blanket scepticism about the value of sociological analysis and the possibility of generalisation' (Kuper 1996: 126).

A historical approach itself had not always been ignored among his anthropological colleagues. Kuper (1996) points out that '... Monica Hunter (Wilson), Gluckman and Schapera, to name but three, had always used historical materials in the interpretation of African societies' (Kuper 1996: 126). Schapera (1962) critically assesses Evans-Pritchard's idea of "the anthropological use of history", which is by no means the sole insight into British social anthropology at that time. Many students of the functional

school and others had also carried out time-reckoning ethnographic works including his own at least before the Marett lecture (Schapera 1962: 146). Lewis (1968) remarks that the argument between Radcliffe-Brownian "ahistoricism" and Evans-Pritchard's "historicism" is often exaggerated: 'Appearances based on the strictures of Radcliffe-Brown, or on the counter-arguments of Evans-Pritchard, are ... somewhat deceptive, especially when associated with such wider issues as the metaphorical status of anthropology whether as a science or as one of humanities' (Lewis 1968: xiv).

Some think that the impact which Evans-Pritchard had upon the next generations is less significant on this issue. Kuper (1996) states that 'The real revolution in African ethnohistory occurred only in the following decade when Jan Vansina and others showed how oral tradition is tapped ... '(Kuper 1996: 126). This movement, as Kuper adds, is not a direct reflection of Evans-Pritchard's own historical approach, which was based on published and documentary sources (Kuper 1996: 126). This issue was also discussed at an ASA conference in 1966 (*History and Social Anthropology*, published in 1968 edited by Lewis). Thomas (1989) bitterly comments on the outcome: 'What is notable about the essays, however, that there are really none which go far toward integrating historical and anthropological methods and concerns' (Thomas, N. 1989: 123).

Evans-Pritchard's argument, in fact, had an influence more on other disciplines, especially history. Keith Thomas, an Oxford historian, published an article critical of orthodox historians, who have primarily studied modern political history, following his literature review of Evans-Pritchard's 'Anthropology and History' of 1961.

The artificial limitation of the subject-matter of modern history is educationally tragedy. It can only be regretted that the Oxford School of Modern History turns out men and women whose understanding and self-awareness in everyday matters is seldom enhanced by their historical studies. They realise that political and economic structures may change, but they have little conception of the evolution of human and family relationships or of the historical and social factors which determine them.

(Thomas 1961: 388)

This statement demonstrates that Evans-Pritchard's argument was more or less thought-provoking among professional historians: it inspired some of them to pass beyond the

narrow definition of history, or modern political aspect of the past, to the broader category, or social history including political and economic structures.

Thomas (1963) later presents an extended version<sup>11</sup> of this article (Thomas 1963: 7). It is also interesting that his historical study of medieval England (1971) shows the use of anthropological insight: He attempts to understand the mystical customs such as magic and witchcraft which were current in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, as rational and meaningful systems (see also Chapter 5). These topics had been underestimated by orthodox historians' perspective. Needless to say, his historical inquiry is guided by Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande witchcraft (1937b).

Evans-Pritchard's works provided a subtle but credible guideline for younger anthropologists. John Davis, who read history in his undergraduate days, has attempted to develop his anthropological analysis with the aid of a historian's point of view. In fact, Davis (1977) has already recognised that the Mediterranean societies where he primarily works are "a major producer of history", and thus critical when anthropologists study these areas from a historical viewpoint. In his recent studies, Davis attempts a structural exploration of how past events are memorised and produced as "history" (e.g. 1989, 1992). As one of the former pupils whom Evans-Pritchard supervised, Wendy James fully understands the importance of "local history", or "the knowledge of the past" in her study of the Uduk people in the Ethiopian-Sudan borderland. She (1988) appreciates historical inquiry particularly in investigating their religious affairs, which have been considerably influenced and transformed by the frequent interaction with neighbouring peoples and by the recent involvement with the Western world. That is, she studies the current form of religious thoughts and practice among this tribe as a kind of "archive" of their knowledge about the past, present and

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<sup>11</sup> Keith Thomas was asked by Lawrence Stone, one of his Oxford colleagues, to review his original article in 1961. This revision develops the mutual relationship between history and anthropology. Here Thomas also points out the weakness of British social anthropology, which, he believes, stemmed from their ahistorical orientation based on the Radcliffe-Brownian tradition. : Their primal emphasis on social structure and synchronic analysis has obviously prevented them from studying firstly, the vertical social relationships e.g. the study of family in (English) history, the education of children, secondly the study of human existence such as birth, adolescence and death, the history of clothes as a chronological study of different ways of dressing by gender, the history of art as a reflection of human perception etc. See also Thomas (1963)

future. It is also interesting that her latest essay (James 1998) about C.G. Collingwood, attempts to find a common approach in Evans-Pritchard's anthropological inquiry and Collingwood's historical quest.

Lewis (1968) evaluates the reciprocal relationship between anthropology and history itself, although he points out the deceptive feature of this issue in terms of an intellectual antagonism between Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard as given above. Regardless of to what degree Evans-Pritchard's argument has inspired the following generations, it is true that there has been a growth of time-reckoning studies, exemplified by Davis and James above. About the impact of Evans-Pritchard's argument, Smith (1962) stated, in the early 1960's, that '...social anthropologists of late have increasingly undertaken diachronic enquiries. They have done so ... with guidance mainly from Evans-Pritchard's Marett Lecture and Broadcast talks' (Smith 1962: 79).

It is now obvious that social anthropologists can no longer be blind to the historical context of societies they study partly in the intellectual climate. The recent ethnographic studies of social change or dynamics in anthropology are not only the outcome of the decolonisation. It is also noteworthy that the sociological concern has been increasing among historians, who became more aware of the nature of their profession and subject-matter, or "history"; whether it is the mere concern to "the past" (e.g. Carr 1961). Yet ironically, while it was the humanism of historians that attracted Evans-Pritchard, it was the Functionalism of anthropology that attracted historians such as Keith Thomas and Davis<sup>12</sup>.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed "the mutual relationship between anthropology and history" as a critical issue which Evans-Pritchard brought to British social anthropology. It started with his criticism of the ahistoricism of the modern functional orientation. His

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<sup>12</sup> Both Thomas and Davis made it clear to me in their interviews that as historians, they were attracted by anthropology's emphasis on the connections between institutions. Davis wanted to study how industrial society was changed by the growth of towns occupied by the bourgeoisie. Thomas comments that, unlike anthropologists, historians specialise in politics, economics or religion (see also Thomas 1963:12-3). When Davis moved from Oxford to the LSE after graduating in history (Oxford), he intended to undertake historical research (personal communication, December, 1998-January 1999)

Marett lecture emerged again in his antipathy to the synchronic orientation of anthropological scientism.

The anthropological use of history is probably one of the anthropological themes which Evans-Pritchard attempted to elaborate with enthusiasm. His idea of “historical anthropology” was a kind of synthesis of ethnographic work with historian’s discipline. In other words, it was an attempt to prove the functional stability of social institutions over a long period. Indeed the similarities of anthropology and history enable us to trace such structural continuity: anthropology and history commonly study “peoples” or “societies” and equally attempt to make a descriptive integration of them. Building on these similarities, Evans-Pritchard seemingly hoped that these disciplines would converge to contribute to each other in the future.

Having concentrated primarily on Evans-Pritchard’s idea, this chapter covered only the ahistoricism of British social anthropology, particularly of the modern functional orientation. Although Evans-Pritchard had recognised similar circumstances in many countries (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1961]: 46), the intellectual attitude toward “history” in anthropological programs is apparently different from one country to another and from time to time. Layton (1997) sees a similar argument about the distinction between science and history as having already been current among German philosophers influencing the works of Weber and Boas in the beginning of the century (Layton 1997: 114; Boas 1940[1887]: 645). Walters (1980), in his essay on Geertz’s influence on historians, remarks on the affinity with history of American cultural anthropology particularly since the 1950s (Walters 1982:539) In this sense, Evans-Pritchard was merely on the fringe of the mainstream of this global and sustained issue entitled “anthropology and history”.

Evans-Pritchard, however, should never be undervalued in the British debate on this issue. His arguments and ethnographies must have guided younger anthropologists in elaborating their historical inquiries in their research. They have enthusiastically attempted to integrate “the past” and “the present”, restore the past in the present condition, study the changing “present”, which would be probably quoted in the future as “the past”.

Evans-Pritchard allegedly stated that anthropologists who had read other disciplines in their undergraduate days were subsequently likely to go back to the places they were from. Pocock (1974) states, taking over this aphorism, that 'He allied himself with the discipline of his undergraduate years because the scepticism born of his gifts pointed him in that direction' (Pocock 1975: 329). This statement seems a most eloquent conclusion of this chapter.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***The Translation of Culture***

The previous chapter focused chiefly on Evans-Pritchard's idea to incorporate historical inquiry in social anthropology. This idea was then noteworthy at least in the modern British school. It appeared primarily as a demonstration of his humanistic orientation in this field. This chapter discusses "cultural translation" as one of the main tasks of anthropology and also as a different aspect of Evans-Pritchard's humanistic viewpoint.

#### **1. Evans-Pritchard's translation of culture in theory**

Cultural translation is one of the main tasks in which anthropology ought to engage consciously or unconsciously. It literally means to render one culture in the language of another, or making sense of unfamiliar customs of societies which anthropologists study, in light of the cultural framework of the anthropologists' own. This is not straightforward, especially when anthropologists come across customs which do not exist in their own cultures.

Asad (1986) presents an essay on the concept of cultural translation in British social anthropology. It is Lienhardt's essay, *Modes of Thought* (1954) that is 'possibly one of the earliest-certainly one of the subtle-examples of the use of this notion of translation explicitly to describe a central task of social anthropology' (Asad 1968 :142). As briefly mentioned in Chapter 3, Lienhardt was one of Evans-Pritchard's former pupils and colleagues in Oxford. Asad adds that 'Oxford is, ... famous as the anthropological centre in Britain most self-conscious about its concern with "the translation of cultures"' (Asad 1968 :142).

Regardless of such tradition in Oxford anthropology, it seems that Evans-Pritchard had thought that cultural translation was one of the tasks of anthropology and ethnography (Needham 1981: 17; Hannerz 1993: 45). Yet there is no thematic essay to indicate his idea on this issue: Evans-Pritchard had occasionally mentioned this issue by, for example, emphasising his humanistic approach in social anthropology.



The Marett Lecture (1962[1950]) briefly assesses this issue. In terms of “cultural translation”, he explains first what the anthropologist essentially does: in fieldwork, which is the preliminary but crucial stage in studying societies, which are frequently the remote “others”. The anthropologist gradually enters into not only the physical and material world, but also the conceptual world of the people he is studying. Then s/he critically and interpretatively experiences his own culture at the same time through this field experience. Evans-Pritchard sees this stage virtually as translating one culture into another, thus societies are made culturally intelligible (Evans-Pritchard: 1962[1950]: 22). It is anthropological fieldwork that Evans-Pritchard regards cultural translation, which renders alien concepts and forms of life in the light of the fieldworker’s own cultural framework.

Characteristically Evans-Pritchard (1962[1950]) differentiates the stage of fieldwork from that of analysis in social anthropology. Fieldwork is an actual experience of cultures where social anthropologists intend to study, whereas analysis is the following construction of the field records, or seeking to discover the structural order of the society, the patterns which, once established, enable him (an anthropologist) to see it as a whole, as a set of interrelated abstractions’ (Evans-Pritchard 1962[1950]: 22). He seemingly believes that these two processes are fundamentally different from each other, distinguishing them as “cultural translation” and “sociological abstraction” although they are both necessary procedures in a single ethnographic work. In other words, fieldwork is the preliminary phase in understanding societies at the empirical level, while the sociological analysis is used to understand the structural order of the societies at a theoretical level.

In an another essay focusing on fieldwork, Evans-Pritchard (1960[1951]) approaches this issue from the technical aspect as follows:

If the right kind of temperament is not always found with ability, special training, and love of scholarship, it is rarely combined also with the imaginative insight of the artist which is required in interpretation of what is observed, and the literary skill necessary to translate a foreign culture into the language of one’s own. The work of the anthropologist is not photographic. He has to decide what is significant in what he observes and by his subsequent relation of his experience to bring what is significant into relief. For this he must have, in addition to a wide knowledge of anthropology, a feeling for form and pattern, and a touch of genius.

(Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 82)

Here Evans-Pritchard emphasises that anthropologists ideally require many skills to make a good translation of culture. Studying other cultures, as Evans-Pritchard believes, should not be merely an empirical report like photography, but a selective, literary and artistic one to extract and describe cultural significance. That is, the translation of culture is not only the mechanical process of transferring one language into another, but also a complex task carefully to sort out cultural uniqueness and equivalence between two languages.

## **2. Case study: Azande witchcraft**

Evans-Pritchard's ideas on cultural translation above are sparse, and thus it is hard to comprehend how he actually translates cultures as an anthropological program. Cultural translation is, in fact, more explicitly demonstrated in his ethnography rather than his theoretical texts. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Evans-Pritchard 1937b) is probably one of the best examples in understanding Evans-Pritchard's idea of cultural translation. This monograph is based on his first fieldwork among the Azande in the central Africa from 1926, and this comprehensive volume indicates that he was conscious of cultural translation as a task of anthropology in his early career. Later Evans-Pritchard (1960[1951]) clearly states that 'It is an attempt to make intelligible a number of beliefs, all of which are foreign to the mentality of a modern Englishman, by showing how they form a comprehensible system of thought, and how this system of thought is related to social activities, social structure, and the life of the individual' (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 98). Based on his intensive and intimate field research, Evans-Pritchard attempts to understand a series of bizarre customs among this people rather than merely recording the ethnographic facts.

### **Azande witchcraft**

The Azande who lived in the Southern Sudan had what seemed a strange custom in the eyes of Westerners: When any misfortune happened, such as accidents or death, they usually considered it the act of *mangu*, or 'witchcraft'. A Zande man, for example, had

taken a rest under a granary during the heat of day. Suddenly that granary collapsed and crushed him beneath it because the supports had been eaten by termites. Westerners would think of this as merely bad luck or an accident, whereas the Azande saw it as witchcraft. In contrast to Westerners, the Azande maintained that death itself was not caused solely by the collapse. It was also caused by a certain witch (or witches) who brought about the conjunction of events, so that the man happened to be sitting under the granary when it collapsed. Witchcraft explains the chains of chance, particularly of mischance.

Their beliefs in witchcraft were also deeply rooted in the local knowledge. Zande witches were not merely imaginary beings whom the Azande referred to at their mishaps. They believed that some people were actually witches who brought misfortunes to others. These witches were, however, thought to use no magic, nor medicine to harm to others. They were assumed to have a special organ (or witchcraft substance) in their body to bring misfortunes to others: witchcraft was caused by their innate and mystical power although the witchcraft substance itself could be identified by post-mortem autopsy. The mystical power was thought to unilineally descend from fathers to sons or from mothers to daughters. Everybody was potentially a witch, but nobody knew who were witches and when they would demonstrate their evil power. Witchcraft was basically caused by such an unconscious power.

This local knowledge about witchcraft was also institutionalised. Witchcraft beliefs as social institutions consisted of four elements, namely witchcraft, witchdoctor, oracles and magic. Whenever misfortunes took place such as disease or accident, the Azande generally perceived them as witchcraft. Then, the sufferer or his or her kin consulted witchdoctors with the special knowledge of medicine to divine the witch(es) who brought the mishaps. Once the culprits were identified by witchdoctors, the case could be re-affirmed by oracles. Oracles tested the truth of alleged cases through feeding poison to a chicken. Depending on the question, if the chicken died, the culprit was found guilty, and if not, found to be innocent. Then magic for healing or vengeance would be carried out in accordance with the outcome of the oracle's consultation.

These series of bizarre customs must look 'irrational' to the eye of most Westerners at first. The Azande attributed most of their misfortunes to 'witchcraft'. Some of their 'bewitched' cases were clearly "accidents" in the light of the scientific knowledge and the Western rationale of physical and natural causation of events. For example, the granary house can collapse at any time of day regardless of whoever is sitting underneath. It collapses because the supports of the granary had been gnawed away by termites, or with any other "good" reasons. The man experienced "bad luck" underneath at the very moment of the collapse. Hence coincidence is never to be explained except as "an accident" by the Western rationale. Zande witchcraft apparently opposed the natural and physical reality, thus appearing 'irrational' in their perception of misfortunes from the Western point of view.

Strange customs, especially among "primitive" peoples, were the classical topics of anthropologists from the early days. "Witchcraft" is, obviously, one of them. (e.g. Tylor 1871; Frazer 1890; Lévy Bruhl 1923[1922]; Malinowski 1935: 1948: etc.) Most of these attempts, before the modern methodological breakthrough, aimed at making a logical account of such bizarre customs in light of Western scientific rationale since the Enlightenment. Frazer (1890), for example, attempted to construct a social-evolutionary model of human rational thought from one stage to another: he assumed that human mentality invariably evolved from the belief in magical power, developing into religious faith and finally reaching scientific thought. Primitive societies were in the first stage, while the civilised such as European societies were in the most advanced stage of this evolutionary paradigm. Lévy-Bruhl (1923[1922]), a French sociologist, on the other hand, claimed that primitive peoples did not make a distinction between the natural and supernatural causalities like modern Westerners, thus their mentality was "pre-logical", and prone to correlate physically incoherent things to each other. These explanations, however, were based on hypothetical speculations without field research, reductively treating these bizarre customs in primitive societies as "irrational" or "pre-logical".

After empirical methods became prevalent, modern anthropologists began to insist on the functional utility of strange customs in primitive societies. Malinowski (1935, 1948), for example, saw magical rituals as having a "function" in the local communal activities. The Trobrianders, for instance, uttered a magical spell when they were

making a canoe. Here magic was carried out in the hope of the successful canoe-building by canoe-makers. Malinowski's theory of magic, however, focused solely on the psychological and biological function of cultural phenomena at the mundane level, and thus lacked rigorous sociological analysis: Malinowski did not fully explain why some societies, frequently primitive, had such bizarre customs, whereas some others like Western societies do not, as discussed in Chapter 2.

### **-Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande witchcraft**

Evans-Pritchard must have immediately come across the problem of "scientific thought" in Zandeland. Kuper (1996) states that Evans-Pritchard's problem in his study of Zande witchcraft was "rationality" like his predecessors' (Kuper 1996: 74). As briefly given above, the Azande have strange beliefs to explain most of their misfortunes. This is what Evans-Pritchard attempts to "translate". In contrast to works of his precursors, Evans-Pritchard's study of Zande witchcraft is innovative particularly with regard to two points set out below.

#### **(1) The epistemological revolution: "rationality" without "science"**

Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande witchcraft is outstanding in contrast to earlier theories, which assumed "strange" customs among primitive peoples were unscientific. Regarding witchcraft beliefs among the Azande as being ultimately 'reasonable', Evans-Pritchard insists that witchcraft was a cultural idiom used to explain misfortune without the knowledge of science. That is, the Azande have no natural scientific rationale, as in Western civilisations, to reason out events or phenomena using the chains of natural and physical causation. But they reason logically within the limits of their culture. Any misfortune reminds these people of possible and potential causes in their cultural context. In another essay, Evans-Pritchard (1960[1951]) expresses the view that 'This system has a logical structure' (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]:99). In a word, Azande witchcraft is their cultural rationale: primitive peoples are indeed rational and logical unlike Frazer's or Lévy Bruhl's assumptions.

Indeed Evans-Pritchard made a great effort to translate the concept of “Azande witchcraft” which can not be seen in his own culture. His problem was to tackle the problems of reason without “science”. The oracles were consulted by feeding poison to fowls to confirm certain accusations. Evans-Pritchard himself observed, in Zandeland, that some fowls survived and some died of the administered poison. This poison itself is made from red powder manufactured from a forest creeper (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 260). Here Evans-Pritchard himself had *logically* wondered whether the Azande did not really recognise “the objective reality”: if this poison is lethal by nature, every fowl should die. If poison is fed in larger doses to fowls, they should die more quickly and certainly. Like Western people or any other, the Azande are exposed to this objective reality.

In fact Evans-Pritchard repeatedly tried to convince the Azande to accept this “truth”. But they would not. They believe that this poison works as a means to the oracles’ verdict only when it is properly applied. If not, the Azande believe that fowls would eventually burst. Oracles can in fact give different answers to the same question. A sufferer, for example, consults an oracle about his misfortune, and the oracle gives the sufferer an answer. He can follow the oracle’s judgement. Suppose he would later find the oracle’s consultation failed. Then he can sceptically consult the same oracle again. Although the second answer would differ from the first and he later find it failed again, he can consult another oracle for a further verdict on his misfortune. They never suspect that the oracle’s verdict varies with their manipulation, and also in the amount of dose which oracles fed to fowls. Kuper (1996) acutely expresses the nature of Azande witchcraft: ‘The failure ... actually strengthens their belief in the whole complex of assumptions’ (Kuper 1996: 77). Evans-Pritchard finally insists that ‘Azande do not perceive the contradiction as we perceive it because they have no theoretical interest in the subject, and those situations in which they express their beliefs in witchcraft do not force the problem upon them’ (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 25). He reached this conclusion through his own failure to persuade the Zande to face the inconsistency in their ways of thought.

Like Europeans, the Azande reason logically, but ultimately within the limit of their culture. This is one of the greatest points which Evans-Pritchard’s study of Azande

witchcraft made. Earlier anthropologists did not appreciate this point because their explanations were based on hypothetical speculations concerning so-called "primitive mentalities". Within the Zande cultural context, witchcraft beliefs make sense, however they make nonsense beyond the cultural boundaries. Rationality invariably differs from one culture to another. It is Zande rationality that Evans-Pritchard has implicitly translated.

## **(2) The methodological significance: sociological abstraction**

Evans-Pritchard's insight in translating cultures also appears significant from the methodological point of view. Kuper (1996) regards Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande witchcraft as a radical model of abstraction (Kuper 1996: 79). That is, the second feature of this study lies in Evans-Pritchard's sociological analysis of strange customs. By thoroughly correlating Zande beliefs to the social structure, Evans-Pritchard succeeds in proving that witchcraft is not only a cultural idiom to explain misfortunes, but also a social function to control the communal order.

In his intimate field research, Evans-Pritchard found that Zande witchcraft accusation took place only within a mundane context. The Zande kingdom is a highly stratified society controlled by a limited number of political leaders (princes). In such a social climate, the commoners feel jealous of wealth and privileges of their neighbours, so that there are a number of witchcraft consultations and accusations. But there is no witchcraft accusation between different social classes such as between the ruling people and the common people. In this hierarchical society, witchcraft takes place chiefly between sceptical and jealous commoners. In fact, socially privileged people actually join in the process of judging witchcraft accusations among commoners, however they do not have their own.

By focusing on why only the commoners are "bewitched", Evans-Pritchard sees the series of witchcraft accusations as social processes. That is, the privileged people, who take part in these actions, actually control the social order. The witchdoctor was a kind of good sociologist in Zandeland who understood social relationships. Their social role was to divine social enemies on behalf of sufferers. The following consultation of

oracles, who are socially privileged, implicitly induce lay individuals to look back at their socially malevolent deeds to other communal members. The threat of discovery through oracles virtually controls individuals' jealousy and hostility to one another, which were potential social evils in the community. Then magic was carried out as if it was the primary means to remove the causes of misfortune. Witchcraft is also the result of social conflict occurring among commoners. Through these social institutions and processes, conflicts between individuals are deterred, and thus communal harmony is maintained. As Evans-Pritchard acutely puts it, witchcraft explains not only unforeseeable misfortunes, but also provides the 'socially relevant cause' (Kuper 199: 79). Zande witchcraft not only explains misfortunes, but also implicitly controls social relationships. Their beliefs in witchcraft are not a cultural fancy, but a social reality to reinforce social morality and judgement.

Evans-Pritchard's sociological abstraction proves that the Zande beliefs in witchcraft are closely related to the social structure for the maintenance of social conformity, as it also explains the unpredictable misfortune. Indeed the institutional processes in witchcraft accusation interdependently constitute a single set of social processes for the entire welfare of Zande land. Misfortunes bring them to review their social relationships and recall legitimised organisations as a means of social justification. About this character of witchcraft accusation, Evans-Pritchard states that 'The notion of witchcraft gives the Azande not only a natural philosophy but also a moral philosophy, ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 100). The sociological analysis, which is absent in Malinowski's analysis of magic, is indeed important in comprehensively understanding the structural function of cultural phenomena, and thus translating the characteristics of mystical beliefs (see also the sections entitled: 2. Malinowskian anthropology and 3. Evans-Pritchard's criticism of Malinowski: 'Anthropology and the Social Sciences' in Chapter 2).

### **3. Evans-Pritchard's translation of culture in practice**

#### **(1) The search within the limit of culture**

As we have seen, the Azande have a distinctive custom to correlate physically and naturally irrelevant things to each other especially at misfortune. Their mystical ways of



thinking, however, become fully intelligible through Evans-Pritchard's account: witchcraft explains chance events and it also patterns the social sentiment and behaviour. Evans-Pritchard literally made Zande beliefs in witchcraft both culturally and sociologically intelligible.

In fact, Evans-Pritchard's study of Azande witchcraft is an attempt to trace its structure both in terms of the logical and the social. Pocock (1971[1961]) examines the distinctive feature of Evans-Pritchard's analysis of Zande witchcraft as follows:

In Professor Evans-Pritchard's first book, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, ... The phenomena under discussion are not *explained* solely by the extent to which they inspire and maintain sentiments which make for the integration of Zande society. The concern is rather to show first what the Azande do and what they believe about their actions to each other in such a manner that, given certain premises, they are seen to constitute a logical system. Secondly, this system is related to, and seen to be in meaningful accord with, the formal social organisation of the Azande and with the general view that they have of the universe in which they live.  
(Pocock 1971[1961]:72-3)

As Pocock insists, Evans-Pritchard attempts to clarify the coherence between Zande thoughts and behaviour, then to prove that these modes of coherence are not irrational, but fully meaningful in the local cultural context. That is, the two stages of anthropological inquires (fieldwork and sociological analysis) basically have the same goal: understanding cultural phenomena strictly within the limit of culture, including their worldview. Douglas (1980) states that Evans-Pritchard's structural analysis is exactly the same as his cultural translation: 'He develops and popularizes a method of structural analysis that makes sense of what once seemed nonsense, the sense of analogy in place of the nonsense of contradiction' (Douglas 1980:119-20). In fact, Evans-Pritchard criticised Malinowski, who ignored this kind of structural analysis, and thus failed a holistic explanation of cultural phenomena as Chapter 2 discussed.

Such a method of analysis can be seen as a kind of cultural translation or an attempt to make the unintelligible intelligible. Indeed Evans-Pritchard proves, from the epistemological point of view, that primitive societies are as logical as most Westerners are. Their beliefs and behaviour, although not based on the Western scientific rationale or the straight acceptance of "objective reality", were rational enough to reason things, particularly mishaps in their cultural context. His sociological analysis abstracted

“bizarre” Zande customs as a set of rational systems. In fact their mystical thoughts and action were found to be a series of social institutions to control and maintain the entire conformity of Zandeland.

Witchcraft is not “fancy”, but a cultural and social rationale. Both of these “rationalities” were gained by Evans-Pritchard’s endeavour to study social phenomena within the limit of culture. Indeed Evans-Pritchard stresses the importance of this attitude in social anthropology, particularly in the fieldwork: ‘He (the social anthropologist) is ... working within the limit imposed by the culture of the people he is studying’ (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 83, bracket is my own). Thus it would also be important to acquire an intimate proximity with the local life for a sufficient period of time and the communication through the local language (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 77). Indeed Hatch (1973) states that ‘Evans-Pritchard implies that all social institutions are to be viewed from inside, ... having an internal coherence and validity which makes it compelling to the member of society, ... he has turned society inside-out’ (Hatch 1973: 245-6).

## **(2) A semantic contemplation of “other cultures” and “ours”**

Once the cultural translator gains the contextual understanding of the culture which s/he is studying, s/he ought to move into the next stage, or rendering that knowledge in the light of his/her own language, or culture. Obviously Evans-Pritchard’s translation of Zande witchcraft is not the mere replacement of cultural equivalents.

Pocock (1971[1961]) states that Evans-Pritchard’s analysis ‘goes through the distinctive appearances of Zande magic to find out what the Azande have in common with other societies. There emerges an implicit comparison between their witchcraft and our notions of belief, causality and moral systems, ...’ (Pocock 1971[1961]:73). That is, Evans-Pritchard takes the semantic problems into consideration when carrying out his anthropological work. “Witch”, for example, does not always refer to the stereotypical image of a malevolent agent in medieval Europe. In the light of his empirical data, Evans-Pritchard explains the image of witches among the Azande to his Western readers: ‘When a Zande speaks of witchcraft he does not speak of it as we

speak of the weird witchcraft of our own history. Witchcraft is to him a commonplace happening and he seldom passes a day without mentioning it. ... To us witchcraft is something which haunted and digested our credulous forefathers. But the Zande expects to come across witchcraft at any time of the day and night' (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 64). Evans-Pritchard's work compels the immediate review of such stereotypes of "witchcraft" in Western world. That is, anthropologists as cultural translators have to consider prudently the cultural equivalence between the culture to be translated and the culture to which they belong. There should be no automatic replacement of words, but a patient contemplation of the semantic connotations and a deliberate re-definition of each word to be used in the actual procedure of translation.

Evans-Pritchard's work consequently innovated a new frame of reference in translating cultures. It is a kind of different perspective from the fieldworker's own determined by his/her cultural background. From this new and different point of view, Evans-Pritchard successfully translated Zande culture into his own, or Western culture. A new frame of reference, in other words, is a philosophical exercise in understanding other cultures in the light of anthropologists' own. This is also one of Evans-Pritchard's contributions to the technical aspect of cultural translation.

Cultural translation is obviously one of the crucial agendas in anthropology, as Evans-Pritchard's work above demonstrated. Although he stresses the importance of the use of everyday language in anthropological writings, Evans-Pritchard warns of the danger of making a mechanical translation with colloquial language: 'Such words as 'society', 'culture', 'custom', 'religion', 'sanction' 'structure', 'function', 'political', and 'domestic' do not always convey the same meaning either to different people or in different contexts' (Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]:2). With a different perspective from anthropologists' own, anthropologists translate other cultures, which have their own significance and uniqueness.

Beattie (1964) clarifies the difference between anthropology and sociology in terms of cultural translation:

... the fact that social anthropologists have mostly worked in unfamiliar cultures has imposed on them a problem of translation which is much less acute for sociologists, though it certainly exists for them, too. Sociologists usually speak the same language (more or less) as the people they study, and they share with them at least some of their basic concepts and categories. But for the social anthropologist the most difficult part of his task is usually to understand the language and ways of thought of the people he studies, which may be-and probably are-very different from his own. This is why in anthropological fieldwork a sound knowledge of the language of the community being studied is indispensable, for a people's categories of thought and the forms of their language are inextricably bound together. Thus questions about meanings, and about the interpretation of concepts and symbols, usually demand a larger part of the attention of social anthropologists than sociologists.

(Beattie 1964: 31)

Sociology is often thought to be the closest discipline to British social anthropology. Here Beattie remarks that the apparent distinction between the social anthropologist and the sociologist is whether they have to face the matter of language, or the linguistic and semantic problems in their own research. Beattie was also one of Evans-Pritchard's pupils in Oxford. Fully inspired by Evans-Pritchard, this younger anthropologist has engaged in this methodological issue in anthropological programs more seriously, as his text above shows.

Evans-Pritchard's idea of cultural translation and its demonstration are roughly discussed above. It is now clear that cultural translation is not a mechanical procedure, and thus it requires the selective insight and skills to enter into the deeper structure of local life to be translated. By the structural analysis, Evans-Pritchard studied witchcraft fully as a rational and meaningful system. Zande mystical beliefs become intelligible only when Evans-Pritchard saw them deeply in the cultural context both at empirical and sociological levels.

Here the Marett Lecture reminds us of Evans-Pritchard's statement that the anthropological fieldwork is a kind of cultural translation, or virtually the stage that anthropologists 'critically and interpretatively experience their own cultures' through studying others. Pocock (1971[1961]), one of Evans-Pritchard's pupils, shares this idea with his teacher; or the work of the social anthropologist as 'a highly complex act of translation' (Pocock 1971[1961]: 88). He adds that the social anthropologist as a cultural translator makes a kind of 'implicit comparison': '... in the first piece of

fieldwork the anthropologist is comparing the categories of his own society with those of the society he studies; ... (Pocock 1971[1961]: 90). Evans-Pritchard and Pocock must have agreed with each other on the point that anthropologists invariably make a comparison between other cultures which they study and their own, then between the two languages. Indeed anthropologists do not only study other peoples or societies, but also unconsciously their own.

The issue of cultural translation has been controversial as an issue of anthropological subjectivity in investigating *other* cultures, especially in the last two decades. Asad (1986) distinguishes the technical and epistemological differences between anthropologists and linguists in the process of translation:

One difference between the anthropologist and the linguist in the matter of translation is perhaps this: that whereas the latter is immediately faced with a specific piece of discourse produced within the society studied, a discourse that is *then* textualized, the former must construct the discourse *as* a cultural text in terms of meanings *implicit* in a range of practices. The construction of cultural discourse and its translation thus seem to be facets of a single act.

(Asad 1986: 160)

Added to Beattie's distinction between anthropologists and sociologists, the gulf between anthropology and other disciplines is enormous all the time in terms of translation. According to Asad, the social anthropologist differs from the linguist in terms of whether the translator has to make a logical order of the culture which s/he is going to "translate". That is, the linguist has already accepted 'the complete discourse' to be translated, whereas the anthropologist has to first construct the discourse itself into an intelligible text, then translate or make an anthropological text for his readers. Asad's essay represents the fact that contemporary anthropologists are more sensitive about "their own work" in studying "other cultures".

Beyond the issue of cultural translation itself, Evans-Pritchard's study of witchcraft itself had a profound influence on the study of "rationality" in and outside anthropology. Further ethnographic monographs about witchcraft beliefs have been presented especially since the 1960s (e.g. Middleton & Winter 1963; Marwick 1965 et al). Douglas (1970) edited various ethnographic reports on witchcraft beliefs both in

contemporary and historical contexts. Thomas, an Oxford historian and one of the interviewees for this thesis, acknowledges the influence of Evans-Pritchard's study of witchcraft. His historical study of English witchcraft (1971) is an attempt to re-interpret various mystical thoughts such as astrology, magical healing as rational and meaningful systems, which were current in sixteenth and seventeenth century (see also the section entitled: 5. After Evans-Pritchard's historical anthropology in Chapter 4). Polanyi, M., a Hungarian philosopher, was also inspired by Evans-Pritchard's study of witchcraft (Polanyi 1973). There were also numerous criticisms of Evans-Pritchard, exemplified by Winch, an Oxford philosopher (1979[1970]). What is commonly seen in these studies on witchcraft and rationality is a critical point for scholars of any field in developing their own research with reference to ethnographic facts, then analysing their place in social and cultural life.

## 4. Conclusion

It is clear now that cultural translation is, as Evans-Pritchard believed, an essential task in which anthropologists should consciously engage. Indeed it is not simply a technical matter for professional translators to replace a language into another. The cultural translator has to render one culture into another, thus it is virtually inevitable for him/her to go beyond cultural boundaries. As another practical example of his commitment to cultural translation, Evans-Pritchard encouraged some of his colleagues and pupils to translate foreign writings. Needham and Cunnison translated some of works of French *Année* school (e.g. Mauss, 1954[1924] by I. Cunnison, R. Hertz, 1960[1909] and Durkheim and Mauss, 1963[1903], by R. and C. Needham), for which Evans-Pritchard wrote introductions. He also encouraged Mediterraneanists to publish their anthropological works (e.g. Pitt-Rivers 1961). Their works can be seen as a kind of translation of cultures.

Translation is a kind of mediating work between two different languages, or cultures. Evans-Pritchard, however, had paradoxically focused on the cultural context to be translated, or thoroughly and clinically studied customs within the limit of their culture. He seemingly believed that contextual understanding was nothing less than the basis of

a good translation of culture, and thus a better understanding of cultures, as a task for the social anthropologist. Thus he deliberately narrowed down his milieu of anthropological analysis and made an intensive and qualitative research of Zande witchcraft in the hope of making the unintelligible fully intelligible. His sociological analysis also played an important role in revealing the structure of Zande witchcraft. Thus his cultural translation achieved contextual understanding. Evans-Pritchard's idea of cultural translation as the task of the social anthropologist reminds us of the importance of this stance, or studying other cultures within their limit. His study of Azande witchcraft demonstrates his idea of cultural translation in action.

Nowadays cultural translation cannot be ignored and is one of the central tasks of social anthropologists. Evans-Pritchard said that anthropological fieldwork is the work of translating one culture into another. Ethnographers go to the field, learn the local way of life and bring the experience back home. Their ethnography is a factual report to represent not only the other culture, but also to reflect the ethnographers' own. Evans-Pritchard's idea thus appears a kind of implicit comparison between the observer, or anthropologist and the observed, or the indigenous peoples, as Pocock (1971[1961]) sensibly puts it. The implication of this chapter's theme is that nevertheless the social anthropologist must enter into the deeper structure of cultures they study. Evans-Pritchard is one of the few modern anthropologists to inspire this essential, but critical task of ethnographic work.

## **Chapter 6**

### ***Social Anthropology***

The last four chapters have discussed thematically Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works, especially his humanistic orientation in social anthropology. The first three chapters dealt primarily with the significance of his ideas in contrast to those of his predecessors, especially Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, while the remaining chapter focused on one of the main tasks of anthropology in which Evans-Pritchard believed. This concluding chapter attempts to make an overall evaluation of Evans-Pritchard's work based on these four chapters.

As several critical issues in this subject, each chapter discussed Evans-Pritchard's emphasis on:

Chapter 2: (1) An inductive analysis rather than a deductive analysis

(2) A sociological orientation or structural analysis rather than a biological or psychological orientation

Chapter 3: (1) The humanistic view rather than the natural-scientific view

(2) Particularisation rather than generalisation

Chapter 4: A historical approach rather than an ahistorical analysis

Chapter 5: Cultural translation as a main task of anthropology

This is a brief summary of Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works which this thesis has developed over four chapters. It would be, however, over-simplified to consider all these features solely in light of his humanistic orientation after the Marett Lecture. "The historical approach", as Chapter 4 discussed, is for example, a kind of revival of his undergraduate discipline which he re-evaluated through his anthropological work. As another example, "the structural analysis" discussed in Chapter 2 seems more or less one of the persisting methods of analysis which he had appreciated throughout his anthropological career. These features are indeed entangled with each other within the



methodological complexity of Evans-Pritchard rather than the mere chronological development which he experienced.

## **1. Evans-Pritchard's social anthropology: as a science and one of the humanities?**

It is apparent that Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works are prolific, and thus complicated. What should be first clarified, at least in this thesis, is the conjunction of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. These themes immediately look contradictory to each other: the former discussed Evans-Pritchard's early idea about social anthropology as a scientific pursuit, whereas the latter stressed his humanistic perspective in ethnographic work. This contradiction cannot be easily regarded as stemming from their time lag: Chapter 2 dealt with his early period around the late 1920s to 1930s, while the following chapter focused primarily on the 1950s, or the beginning of his later anthropological period. The gap over two decades, however, does not effectively work out Evans-Pritchard's anthropological "inconsistency".

Evans-Pritchard's idea of social anthropology as "a science" should be understood in terms of the methodological point of view rather than the theoretical framework. As we have seen, Chapter 2 discussed his rebellion against Malinowski. This was, however, not a theoretical argument. The critical point was Evans-Pritchard's criticism against a crude theorisation and less structural analysis which Malinowski demonstrated: Malinowski attempted to apply his biological and psychological paradigm of function to more or less all social and cultural institutions. In fact Evans-Pritchard chiefly pointed out such an over-simplified generalisation and the absence of structural analysis. That is, the chapter title ('Anthropology and the Social Sciences') represents Evans-Pritchard's methodological rigor in carrying out anthropological works as "a scholarly" pursuit.

Chapter 3, on the other hand, dealt with Evans-Pritchard's humanistic vision in this field. The Marett Lecture was chiefly quoted as his explicit challenge to an anthropological domain associated with Radcliffe-Brown, who regarded societies as natural systems, and thus their study, or social anthropology as "a natural-science". That

is, Chapter 3 emphasised primarily Evans-Pritchard's notable ideas, at least at that time, of societies as moral systems, and thus social anthropology as one of the humanities. His study of Nuer totemism was therefore quoted as an explicit demonstration of his anthropological humanism.

In a sense this contradiction can be interpreted as Evans-Pritchard's personal attitude toward this subject as follows: social anthropology is the study of societies, which are not only natural and organic systems. They are also moral unities, which display unique modes of livelihood and cultural diversity. Thus this subject should aim at studying them as "human" affairs and their cultural significance is to be particularised. The procedure, however, must be "scientific" as an academic pursuit. The social anthropologist should regard the society s/he studies as an observable and collective representation and as a single whole rather than a connection of diverse phenomena. Evans-Pritchard's contradiction can be consequently seen as a kind of philosophical implication in the anthropological quest.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 can be immediately seen as Evans-Pritchard's scepticism of his predecessors, or Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown respectively. The strengths of each were clearly the weakness of the other. Indeed Evans-Pritchard has stood between an outstanding fieldworker and a systematic theorist, and thus successfully achieved in balancing their prominent methods and perspectives as an ethnographer. Evans-Pritchard's contradiction can be seen as, in other words, stemming from his interaction with the strengths of modern anthropological analysis and its weaknesses <sup>13</sup>.

## **2. Comparison as Evans-Pritchard's anthropological method**

This chapter has attempted to summarise the last four chapters, particularly the first two. It has been clarified, so far, that Evans-Pritchard is a kind of "modified modern anthropology" under the influence of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Having been

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<sup>13</sup> Goody (1995) sees that Evans-Pritchard's inconsistency in ideas itself caused his intellectual battles with his predecessors: '... Evans-Pritchard was full of ... contradictions which would have led to a conflict with any dominant figure, Malinowski ..., ... later on with Radcliffe-Brown ...' (Goody 1995: 76).

more or less inspired by these predecessors, Evans-Pritchard came to hold his own distinctive viewpoint. It is true, to some extent, that Evans-Pritchard is a kind of a product of the modern anthropological program as much as he belongs to the second generation. Yet is Evans-Pritchard's work simply a dialectical outcome of his predecessors' works? Are the last four chapters enough to comprehend Evans-Pritchard's humanistic orientation?

Some of Evans-Pritchard's essays present a clue to Evans-Pritchard's anthropological humanism from a different angle. Evans-Pritchard's introduction to the English translation of R. Hertz's *Death and the right hand* (1960) and *The comparative method in social anthropology* (1963) commonly discuss comparison as a critical method in social anthropology. The former was given in the English publication of the essays by Hertz, a member of *L'Année sociologique*. The latter is purely a methodological argument presented at the LSE. These essays equally demonstrate Evans-Pritchard's attitude toward social anthropology, or how social anthropologists ought to study their subject-matter, or societies, by comparison.

The comparative method itself has a long tradition of being employed not only in anthropology, but also in many fields. In fact many scholars have used this method since the ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Machiavelli, and the eighteenth century sociologists such as Montesquieu, Ferguson, Millar, Turgot, Condorcet and Comte. Victorian scientists in the nineteenth century brought a considerable progress to the theoretical development of this subject by this method (see also Evans-Pritchard 1960 12; 1963:4). In modern anthropology, Radcliffe-Brown stressed the importance in social anthropology (e.g. 1958[1951]), as we have seen in Chapter 3. As the reasons why this method has been so popular in many subjects, Evans-Pritchard states that 'Comparison is, ..., one of the essential procedures of all sciences and one of the elementary processes of human thought'(Evans-Pritchard 1963: 3) and '... it is the only method which, in one form or another, can be employed'(Evans-Pritchard 1960: 14). That is, this method itself is not his own invention, nor one of the minor methods in anthropology.

Comparison has, in fact, brought numerous benefits to anthropology. This method has revealed "the nature of society", for example, that human organisations all over the

world are more or less similar, although they display a great cultural diversity. Evans-Pritchard (1960) cites some actual examples such as marriage by capture, totemism, matrilineal descent or various others (see also Evans-Pritchard 1960: 13). The comparative method has enabled anthropologists to discover “the nature of society” and to ground their pursuit as “a science”. In fact a number of anthropologists have rigorously compared one society with others to study “the essence of social institutions” on which they came to classify and generalise human affairs around the world. It is also natural that British anthropologists, as comparative sociologists, particularly of primitive peoples, have relied upon this method for the global tabulation of social organisations.

Indeed many anthropologists have focused on the essence of societies, especially similarities between cultures. The comparative method has, thus, been favoured for their purpose in anthropological study to examine the “universality” of society rather than its “diversity”. They compared more than one society and searched primarily for general traits present in any society studied. As we have seen in Chapter 3, comparison seemed to establish its methodological credibility in anthropology with Radcliffe-Brown. It is no doubt even today that “comparison” is thought to bring “a fair and objective” judgement of phenomena, being thus chiefly employed especially in the natural sciences.

In contrast to such a tradition, Evans-Pritchard stresses social anthropology as ‘the comparative discipline, of differences’ (Evans-Pritchard 1963: 17). This style of comparison does not aim at extracting similarities. What Evans-Pritchard essentially aims by comparison is to study “differences” between historically-related societies or cultures by comparison<sup>14</sup>. As a similar exercise of this principle, he cites the comparative method of Durkheim’s sociology, with which he declares his intellectual identity.

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<sup>14</sup> James, in her interview, pointed this out to me when I asked her to clarify Evans-Pritchard’s famous remark on the comparative method in social anthropology.

Durkheim and his pupils used the comparative method with as much skill and rigour as it is capable of. They were careful to concentrate on a limited range of facts in a limited region ... The ethnographic data of other regions were used only to see whether the conclusions reached in the area chosen for intensive research had a more general validity or what divergences would have to be accounted for.

(Evans-Pritchard 1960: 14)

Evans-Pritchard (1963) further cites his methodological allies such as with Franz Steiner, Schapera, Needham (Evans-Pritchard 1963: 18). That is, Evans-Pritchard's anthropological comparison is an intensive study of a certain social or cultural unit, to highlight its cultural significance.

What does he actually compare in studying a single unit of social or cultural significance? Evans-Pritchard's comparison in anthropology is a kind of qualitative analysis which attempts to explore the deeper context of societies. Thus, his comparison attempts to integratively "compare" all the cultural ingredients with one another such as the environmental, social and historical background. Evans-Pritchard believes in the value of this comparative method as 'an intensive study of a limited and clearly defined cultural region where facts can be examined in their full context of ideas and practices' (Evans-Pritchard 1963: 14-5). In fact Evans-Pritchard attempted to understand Azande witchcraft in its full cultural context (see also Chapter 5).

Evans-Pritchard's anthropological comparison is, in other words, a structural analysis, or correlating concomitant variations of social phenomena. Among the works of *L'Année Sociologique*, Evans-Pritchard praises Hertz's essays as a kind of descriptive integration, and also as a structural analysis, an attempt to understand, 'the meaning of the facts being shown to lie not in themselves, considered as separate facts, but in their interrelation; ...' (Evans-Pritchard 1960: 15). Such correlations are, for Evans-Pritchard, the fundamental key in his anthropological analysis. That is, he compares such structural coherence with one another to understand the specific features of the society which he intensively studies. He emphasises this style of anthropological inquiry as follows: 'The purpose of the investigation does not go beyond an attempt to discover the essential features of the phenomena studied by relating them to other social phenomena' (Evans-Pritchard 1960: 16). In fact he employed this comparative method, or the structural analysis in criticising Malinowski. Evans-Pritchard's argument first

clarified social, political and economic aspects of Melanesia and Africa and correlated them in order to understand the distinctive role of magic in the cultural context of each area (see also Chapter 2). In a word, his anthropological comparison aims at a structural understanding of a particular society or cultural unit, thus the end result consequently distinguishes the uniqueness, or the “differences” between cultures.

In this sense, Evans-Pritchard disagrees with quantitative comparison, which invariably neglects the full cultural context of society, and consequently cultural diversity. Such a comparative program has been seen from early anthropology such as McLennan, Frazer, Westermarck (Evans-Pritchard 1960: 14) to one of the recent statistical survey by G. Murdock (Evans-Pritchard 1963: 17-8). It is apparent that such global-scale comparison does not attract this humanistic anthropologist, who discredits generalisation in anthropology, as we have seen in his repudiation of Radcliffe-Brown’s natural-scientific program (see also Chapter 3).

What Evans-Pritchard fears will occur in the quantitative comparison is nothing more than an ignorance of cultural context. The world-wide scale comparison does not only isolate ethnographic facts, but also gives up all the possibilities to understand human cultural diversity. He reiterates the negative outcome of the quantitative comparison that would invariably ‘take them (or ethnographic facts) from all over the world, lifting them in the process out of their social setting’ (Evans-Pritchard 1960: 14, bracket is my own). As we have seen in Chapter 4, Evans-Pritchard harshly blamed the synchronic analysis of modern functional anthropologists for the neglect of historical context (see also Chapter 4). Further Evans-Pritchard points out several technical difficulties<sup>15</sup> with which the global-scale comparison for similarities essentially entails (Evans-Pritchard 1963:6).

It is obvious that the comparative procedure for extracting “similarities” was firmly legitimised by Radcliffe-Brown in the modern British social school. As we have seen, he favoured this method in the hope of establishing the inductive tradition in this field. In fact he insisted that social anthropology was a comparative sociology, thus social

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<sup>15</sup> Here Evans-Pritchard enumerates difficulties which quantitative comparison invariably embraces (e.g. a vast amount of ethnographic facts to be studied by a limited number of anthropologists. See also Evans-Pritchard (1963)

anthropologists should rigorously compare their subject-matter, or societies to each other and aim to discover universal laws. In this sense Evans-Pritchard challenges Radcliffe-Brown, who explicitly stressed that 'Without systematic comparative studies anthropology will become only historiography or ethnography' (Radcliffe-Brown 1958[1951]:110). Against this view, Evans-Pritchard (1963) addresses himself 'first as an ethnographer and secondly a social anthropologist' (Evans-Pritchard 1963: 28). Some of his pupils remember Evans-Pritchard, especially in his later days, having cynically stated:

Evans-Pritchard's aphorism: 'There's only one method in social anthropology, the comparative method-and that's impossible.'

(Needham 1975:395)

This ambivalent remark shows Evans-Pritchard's antipathy first, to Radcliffe-Brown's, and then to all the natural-scientific programs in this subject, which aims at tabulating all the human affairs in the world. Yet it is indeed hard to achieve in terms of the vast amount of ethnographic facts and the limited number of anthropologists. The statement above eloquently points out the problem of social anthropology as a quantitative, classificatory and generalising science.

### **3. Ethnography: Evans-Pritchard's humanism**

James (1998), in her latest essay about the works of M. Mauss of *Année Sociologique*, makes an interesting analogy between the sociological approach of Mauss and the anthropological inquiry of Evans-Pritchard, the historical quest of R.G. Collingwood.

There are parallels between the ways in which Collingwood, Evans-Pritchard and Mauss seemed to seek out complexity, rather than easy generalisation in the study of human life. Further, and especially with reference to the ethnographers, I believe that we can roughly equate Evans-Pritchard's call for anthropologists to see their ethnographic material in the kind of way that a historian would with Mauss's advocacy of the need to study the forms of social life in all the specificity of their 'concrete' existence.

The appeal of the Durkheimian group to British anthropology stemmed mainly from the fact of their commitment to the integrity of evidence about the remoter peoples of the world. ... What the *Année* group offered to those seeking (, or the ethnographic record) to develop a philosophical framework for social anthropology as one of the humanities was their combination of respect for empirical detail, linguistic sensitivity and the promise of sophisticated, deep-level comparison.

(James 1998:6, bracket is my own)

Here James emphasises the humanistic pursuit at which these three scholars aimed in common. Evans-Pritchard followed the methods of analysis of *L' Année sociologique* in order to achieve the integration of ethnographic data, which would have never been built upon the mechanical process of qualitative analysis of human institutions. James talked to me about her idea of Evans-Pritchard's anthropological inquiry and Collingwood's historical one as a pursuit for "moral equality", which shaped the philosophical investigation of the complexity of human life<sup>16</sup>.

Having fully recognised the limit of quantitative comparison, and thus that of natural-scientific programs in social anthropology, Evans-Pritchard came to advocate the opposite standpoint, or the qualitative comparison, and thus the humanistic orientation in order to investigate certain societies and cultures in particular. In fact most of Evans-Pritchard's writings are ethnographic monographs, which are based on his comparative principle. He deliberately limited the area and aimed at integrating the cultural ingredients altogether to understand the society as a culturally meaningful unity. Indeed the ethnographer can be a specialist in a certain people, but not a generalist of Man.

Evans-Pritchard also seemed to understand the limit of social anthropology as "a science", precisely as a theoretical science in the light of empirical facts, even before his Marett Lecture. Evans-Pritchard's letter to Fortes in 1934, although one in which he hoped mainly to criticise Malinowski's Functionalism, shows his confidence in this field as an ethnographic enterprise:

...it is apparent to a genuine investigator that the functional theories of behaviour have no relation to facts and not based on observation and cannot be investigated in the field. There are purely paper inventions. I think that in a few years there will be a big and proper reaction against this 'balls' and that the more purely descriptive and ethnological works will rank higher than the functional hotch-potch of fact-cum-theory which has nothing to do with the facts.

(Evans-Pritchard in Goody 1995: 75)

As Goody (1995) discusses, this argument could be seen as an expression of Evans-Pritchard's covert hostility of Malinowski rather than his epistemological anticipation of the way this subject would go. Yet no one would have agreed with Evans-Pritchard's

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<sup>16</sup> December, 1998.



prophecy of an anthropological revolution from a theoretical orientation to a descriptive orientation. Ironically Evans-Pritchard was to adhere to a rigid theoretical orientation even after he posted this letter (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard: 1940) His idea itself was realised in his later anthropological career such as his *Nuer Religion* (1956) as we have seen in Chapter 3 and *The Azande: History and Political Institutions* (1971). Gellner (1981), Professor of Philosophy at the LSE, recalled the late Evans-Pritchard work: ‘... there simply is no Evans-Pritchardian *position*, let alone dogma. This ... trait is unusual among men of great influence in a social science’(Gellner 1981: xiii).

It is indeed impossible to work out Evans-Pritchard’s inconsistency in his ideas, which resulted presumably from his antagonism to his predecessors, or the other way round. In the same way, it is difficult to find assured successors of Evans-Pritchard and his doubtless influence on younger generations. Riviere, one of Evans-Pritchard’s colleagues in Oxford remembers that, when he came up to this School as an undergraduate student, Evans-Pritchard tried to persuade him to go to work in Africa instead of South America, which he has mainly studied. Riviere humorously told me that Evans-Pritchard failed in influencing him in this sense. Yet this younger anthropologist admiringly looks at Evans-Pritchard’s ethnographic style as a gifted and marvellous exposition in which actual description amounts to explanation<sup>17</sup>. The same thing is true of other contemporary anthropologists such as Davis and James as far as Evans-Pritchard’s prolific influence is concerned. Each of them seems, consciously or unconsciously, to have learned Evans-Pritchard’s scholarly significance as the basis on which they could develop their own unique research (see also Chapter 4).

I have attempted to summarise the last four chapters by concentrating on the comparative method as one of the keys to clarify Evans-Pritchard’s work in social anthropology. His comparison fundamentally aimed at clinically studying a society or a limited area to highlight its cultural significance and uniqueness among diversity rather than picking out similarities between societies and the universal features of cultures.

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<sup>17</sup> January, 1999.

Then this chapter reached a point that Evans-Pritchard's anthropological comparison emerges from his ethnographic works themselves.

What is the final goal of the social anthropologist who aims basically at ethnographic work? It is obviously not establishing universal laws as many earlier anthropologists attempted. Evans-Pritchard states that his goal in social anthropology is 'a deeper understanding of human society'(Evans-Pritchard 1963: 28). This goal is, needless to say, accomplished only when anthropologists carefully consider their own perspective and methods in their ethnographic study. This thesis has already discussed several anthropological views and methods of analysis which seem to be necessary for "a deeper understanding of human society", namely the structural analysis, the attitude toward societies as moral systems to be studied as they are in particular, the appreciation of historical context and the careful translation of culture. Each of them seems equally to represent Evans-Pritchard's humanism in social anthropology ultimately heading for his goal, probably as an ethnographer. The statement below eloquently shows such a philosophical depth of Evans-Pritchard and is the best phrase to summarise this thesis.

The essential point to remember is that the anthropologist is working within a body of theoretical knowledge and that he makes his observations to solve problems derive from it. This emphasis on problem is, of course, a feature of any field of scholarship. Lord Acton told his history students to study problems and not periods. Collingwood told his archaeology students to study problems not sites. We tell our anthropological students to study problems and not peoples.

(Evans-Pritchard 1960[1951]: 87)

## Conclusion

This chapter attempted to summarise the last four chapters, which are the core of this whole thesis. We have finally arrived at a possible evaluation of Evans-Pritchard's work based on his qualitative comparison, which aimed at intensively studying a certain society or culture. Above all, social anthropology was for him creating "ethnographies".

Some people might not be satisfied with this thesis. In fact Evans-Pritchard brought a "scientific" advance to social anthropology in terms of theoretical orientation. It would

be also possible to say that contemporary anthropologists are more humanistic in their ethnographic works than Evans-Pritchard. This thesis, however, attempted to highlight his humanistic orientation, which was notable at least in his own time. Obviously the intellectual climate of his days differs from ours.

Consequently this thesis presented a kind of *a* short history of British social anthropology to transform from the earlier affinity with the natural sciences into a more humanistic orientation as well as tracing Evans-Pritchard's intellectual development. It is, however, impossible to say that British social anthropology has established its humanistic tradition. No one knows that this subject has entirely turned to the field of the arts. In this sense this thesis should be admitted as *a* probable way to understanding "the past and the present" of our pursuit-social anthropology. Beyond this suspended issue as to whether it is a science or one of the humanities, future anthropologists take over from this thesis, borrowing from Evans-Pritchard in closing his *Nuer Religion* (1956).

## *Conclusion*

This thesis has discussed Evans-Pritchard's ideas and works, particularly his humanistic orientation in social anthropology. Each chapter elucidated his distinctive ideas about anthropological inquiries from several different angles. Chapter 1 mainly dealt with Evans-Pritchard's early anthropological career, which represented his idea about social anthropology as "a science" through his criticism of Malinowski. The following chapter focused on Evans-Pritchard's intellectual shift from Radcliffe-Brownian "scientific" orientation to his humanistic program. His humanistic orientation was more clarified over the following two chapters: one was about his suggestion to incorporate the historical approach into anthropological inquiries, while the other discussed one of the main tasks of anthropology as a cultural translator. The final chapter, based on the last four chapters, summarised his anthropological method as one of qualitative comparison, which aimed at intensively studying certain societies, or making ethnographies rather than providing theoretical orientation.

In comparison with Douglas (1980), the portrait of Evans-Pritchard illustrated in this thesis is not comprehensive: each chapter thematically discussed his humanistic programs. Evans-Pritchard's anthropological works in general are rather prolific, encompassing various aspects of human life from the tribal affinity with the natural environment to the spiritual world in their relationship to God. Thus this thesis missed out some critical points of Evans-Pritchard's contribution to this and other fields. The segmentary theory, for example, is admittedly an interesting topic to understand his systematic theorisation as briefly mentioned in Chapter 4. Having chiefly aimed at highlighting Evans-Pritchard's humanism, this thesis failed to grasp him as "a scientist".

Further this thesis did not succeed in associating Evans-Pritchard's work to contemporary anthropological works, particularly since the 1980s, which saw a dramatic change in intellectual climate not only in anthropology, but also in the social

sciences and the humanities. Even Douglas (1980), in discussing Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic insight, anticipates this critical atmosphere in academia when the modern anthropological program was about to be ethically criticised. In order to keep the subject of the thesis focused, I have not discussed postmodernists' criticisms of his works.

The evaluation of Evans-Pritchard is indeed difficult, as this thesis has demonstrated, for he was clearly one of the important figures in anthropology, and thus we can not understand its development without referring to his works. Various interpretation of his work are possible. Gellner (1981) argued against Douglas's evaluation of Evans-Pritchard(1980), which 'treats him as a precursor of the rather subjectivist, "humanistic", hermeneutic-obsessed trend of recent decades'(Gellner in Evans-Pritchard: 1981: xv-xvi). This thesis has aimed at focusing upon Evans-Pritchard's humanistic orientation, but it is obviously different from Douglas's work. In this thesis, he emerged as a "scientific" anthropologist loaded with "methodological rigor" in one phase (Chapter 2) yet also appeared as a humanist, attempting to appreciate the artistic and creative aspects of social institutions in another (Chapter 3). History, his undergraduate discipline, was revived as a productive anthropological method (Chapter 4). He attempted to serve anthropology as a cultural translator (Chapter 5). This thesis tried to highlight each of these "ideas" equally representing Evans-Pritchard's humanism in carrying out ethnographic works, or the study of Man.

Allegedly some people, mainly Oxford anthropologists talk about an 'Evans-Pritchard industry'. James, one of Evans-Pritchard's former pupils explained me that it refers to "a sign of success" which Evans-Pritchard brought to the development of anthropology, particularly in African studies. This also implicitly means "the glory of Oxford anthropology", which was founded by Evans-Pritchard, according to Davis. When Layton was a student, one of his lecturers (Roy Willis) compared posthumous criticism of Radcliffe-Brown to Pygmies shooting a dead elephant to demonstrate their bravery in hunting. The same analogy might be applied to posthumous criticisms of Evans-Pritchard.

With a gifted ethnographic insight, Evans-Pritchard seems to have aimed at investigating the deeper level of cultures and the complexity of human societies

throughout his academic life. Such a thorough scope will invariably allow us to understand his anthropological philosophy from numerous viewpoints. Therefore this thesis would like to close with an emphasis on a further potential to interpret Evans-Pritchard's work. That is, his significance should vary not only in the light of works of his precursors and contemporaries, but also on those of succeeding generations. At this point, borrowing from Evans-Pritchard in closing his *Nuer Religion* (1956), the future anthropologist 'takes over from' this thesis.

## Appendix 1:

### A Short Biographical Note of E. E. Evans-Pritchard

*Evans-Pritchard, Sir E.E. (Edward Evan)*

- 1902: Born in Crowborough, Sussex, September 21, the second son of Rev. John Evans-Pritchard, a clergyman of the Church of England, and his wife, Dorothea Edwards
- 1916: Entered Winchester College (-1921)
- 1921: Entered Exeter College, University of Oxford, where he took an MA in Modern History (-1924)
- 1924: Entered the London School of Economics (the LSE), where he started his anthropological training.
- 1927: Ph.D., based on his field research among the Azande in central Africa(1926-30).
- 1928: Lectureship at the LSE (-1931)
- 1930: Field research among the Nuer, a Nilotic tribe of Sudan with the financial aid of the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (-1936)
- 1931: Served as Honorary Secretary to the Royal Anthropological Institute
- 1932: Professor of Sociology at Fuad I University (now the Egyptian University of Cairo) (-1934)
- 1935: Research Lecturer in African Sociology at Oxford (-1940)
- 1939: Married Ioma Gladys Heaton Nicholls (three sons and two daughters)
- 1940: Military service, serving as Lieutenant Colonel in the Sudanese Defence Force and as Major in the Intelligence Corps, British Army (-1945)
- 1944: Converted to the Roman Catholic Church.
- 1945: Readership in Anthropology at Cambridge University
- 1946: Professor of Social Anthropology and Fellow of All Souls College, University of Oxford  
Helped to found the Association of Social Anthropologists (the ASA) with M. Fortes
- 1949: President of the Royal Anthropological Institute (-1951) and Life President of the ASA
- 1950: Visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago
- 1957: Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Science, Stanford, California (-1958)
- 1970: Retired from the Oxford post
- 1971: Knighted
- 1973: Died in Oxford, September 11

Source: Beidelman, T.O. (ed.) 1974. *A Bibliography of the writings of E.E. Evans-Pritchard*  
Douglas, M. 1980. *Evans-Pritchard*

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